

William Golding and Fallen Man:
A Socio-Historical Approach

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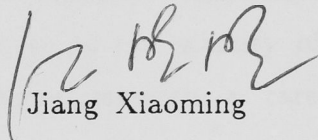
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Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated
this thesis is my own work.



Jiang Xiaoming

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Acknowledgements

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Dedicated to my parents.

Abstract

This thesis examines William Golding's literary image of the Fallen Man from a socio-historical point of view. While most of his novels, with a recognisably consistent theme, are looked at, focus and attention have been devoted to his third book, *Pincher Martin*.

It is an attempt to counterbalance the prevailing views pertinent to Golding's religious preoccupation both in the East and in the West. At its best, the argument of the thesis might serve to reiterate the broad scope of Golding's literary achievements and point to a way in which non-religious scholars, such as a socio-historical critic, could come to terms with some traditional Christian concepts.

The alternative readings of Golding's text are presented as evidence for appreciating his novels from different cultural environments and highlighting his universal appeal. The readings, though different, are not mutually exclusive and are in fact built on the basis of many existing criticisms of Golding rather than directed against them.

In spite of some seemingly contradictory points, almost inevitable in a "counteractive" approach adopted from Golding, the thesis aims at achieving a unified and enriched understanding of this dynamic writer. By transcending the complex domain of religion, it hopes to narrow the gap, if not between Left and Right with regard to Christianity, at least between East and West with regard to Golding's work.

INTRODUCTION

I did not want a Marxist exegesis.

---William Golding, *The Hot Gates*

This is another thesis to add to the Golding industry. In the past thirty years, literary criticism and school papers in the West have dealt quite sufficiently with almost all Golding's works. However, as far as academic research is concerned, precious little has been done in the East, and, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first thesis by a Chinese person from the People's Republic, who has chosen to undertake Golding in a postgraduate research.

Although different emphases have always existed with regard to Golding, as is true of other literary figures, most critics world-wide seem to agree that Golding is a religious writer preoccupied with the evil nature of man, and his novels have been mostly interpreted in an allegorical, moral, and philosophical context. Nevertheless, when judgements are passed, there is basically one major dichotomy of opinion, that between East and West, if the terms could be adapted temporarily here to designate not only geographical locations but also ideological divisions. In the West, the general attitude towards Golding appears to be positive and the overall approach seems to assume a religious context. In the East, which presumably includes the more "left-wing" critics on both sides of the globe, while Golding's artistic merits are recognized, the picture on the whole looks negative, because of the same fact that Golding is treated as a religious writer---almost the equivalent of an "opium" pusher in the classical Marxist terminology.

As a Western writer, Golding's creations do seem to be affected by a religious tradition, perhaps even more so than most of his contemporaries. In fact, some of his novels are so filled with Christian images and symbols that they almost overshadow other layers of meaning. It is not my intention to oppose any of these

interpretations---Golding himself claims to be a "religious man"---though I do hold reservations towards some extreme cases. The point is that like other forms of artistic expression, literary works, particularly those by a novelist as dynamic as Golding, are open to different interpretations, although their authors very often do hold, consciously or unconsciously, a predominant point of view when creating them. The fact that some of Golding's novels are in some sense predominantly "religious" does not mean all his novels have to be interpreted in a strictly Christian perspective. What is more, those novels that are predominantly religious do not have to be regarded as being exclusively so. To force all of Golding's novels into a religious straight jacket not only limits the writer's scope but also the reader's sensitivity. The present thesis is an attempt at a socio-historical approach to Golding's novels, not as opposed to, if only for my personal lack of a Christian background, but as parallel and complementary, to other previous analyses.

Apart from the fact that Golding himself describes his writing as trying to trace the evil of society in the evil of man, rather than the other way around, one seems to be confronted with all the non-socio-historical analyses which have been so well established, especially as far as hermeneutic references to biblical sources are concerned. Furthermore, socio-historical criticism appears to have a reputation of being "far-fetched"---concentrating on the social, historical background of the author rather than the literary work itself, and existing sketches of Golding's life are less than sufficient for an in-depth study. The present thesis will try as much as possible to overcome these defects, largely by centring the argument upon the text, and at the same time by locating the text in a socio-historical context, which indicates an obvious interaction between Golding and figures in history, literature, religion, and culture.

Regardless of the extent to which Golding is preoccupied with the evil of human nature, his fundamental concern is with the illness of society. As a "physician," a term he uses for himself, his patient is society as a whole. In his novels, Golding is not only haunted by the "darkness of man's heart" which is commonly accepted to be the theme of many of his novels, but a wide spectrum of social issues are dealt with, such as the concept of class viewed in terms of different social institutions, the effect of science and technology in human society, as well as common social problems like stratification and alienation.

At the end of an interview with Golding, Baker uses the term "counteraction"

to sum up Golding's work.¹ The term seems appropriate in the present thesis because, as a supplement to Golding's "elusiveness," it suggests an "answer back," one of the predominant features of the writer. What is more, it seems to occupy a middle position between the militancy of terms like "counterattack" and the passivity of terms like "counterbalance," though both of the latter are also used in the present thesis to a lesser extent.

The thesis starts, in the first chapter, with an overview of Golding as a "moving target" and as a "counteractive" force in history in general and in Western literature in particular. My contention is that more can be discerned in Golding's work than merely religion. Taking a Goldingesque counteractive point of view, the thesis will attempt to stress the areligious side of the writer and present the alternative readings as not only relevant but also necessary.

The second chapter, which focuses on *Pincher Martin* as a case in point, aims at illustrating the argument for different possibilities, including my reflection on the existing interpretations in the Western literary circles. The point of departure of this multiple reading (common in literary appreciation) is the statement that the book is "overtly religious and cannot be read in any other way,"² which, though an extreme case, is not totally unrepresentative in the Golding criticism. The different readings, which sometimes seem to contradict one another, are intended to achieve an enriched as well as unified appreciation of the text.

In doing this I claim no more expertise than that of a layman both in terms of the Christian religion and in terms of English literature. It may largely be due to my secular upbringing that Golding's works strike me first and foremost as "social novels," by which I refer to those dealing primarily with social questions and directing the reader's attention to society more than to individuals. This impression seems to agree with James R. Baker's and Raymond Williams' description of Golding's works. However, as an analysis from a different intellectual background and written in a second language, the discussion that follows may seem at times "exotic" or even confusing. Based on a specific notion of society and history, what is offered might, at its best, be defined as an "Oriental" approach to Golding.

¹James R. Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," *20th Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, No.28-2 (Summer, 1982), p.169.

²John Bowen, "One Man's Meat, the Idea of Individual Responsibility," *Times Literary Supplement*, 2997 (7 Aug. 1959), pp.xii-xiii.

A superficial reading of his novels might suggest that the evil of man, as Golding sees it, does not derive from an ordinary social context in an analytical sense. In fact, social class as a concept does not appear in its full meaning until *The Pyramid*. However, if one looks closely enough, class conflict does seem to exist behind all the religious chaos and moral tensions, as will be demonstrated especially in the last chapter.

Perhaps the closest Western equivalent to the methodology the thesis tries to adopt is that of "sociology of literature," which can be understood as a study of the interaction between the writer and the society he lives in. For this reason, realistic fiction, especially social novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth century England, for example those of Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, or Charles Dickens, have always provided convenient subjects for sociological analyses. One typical approach adopted in such a study, especially in China, is to start with the life story of the author, paying particular attention to his or her upbringing in a given social environment. Then by dividing the writer's career into different stages, one somehow pinpoints the relationship between these stages and the crucial changes in the course of the writer's life. It is only natural that sometimes the two do not always correspond with one another, and the sociological critic is in trouble. Either he plunges ahead and comes up with a far-fetched conclusion, or he simply withdraws, opting for a more relevant case in a "tamer" writer.

Another way, and maybe a more up-to-date one at that, is to study cases in which the writer actually responds to public opinion, adjusting his pen to meet the popular demand. One hears of extreme instances when people march the streets protesting the ending of a certain novel and force the author to bring the dead hero back to life. Charles Dickens, although not having mass protests on his heels, did receive and pay attention to the reader's reactions when he was writing and publishing novels chapter by chapter in a literary magazine that he ran. He even altered the ending of *Great Expectations* because Bulwer Lytton said the public would not accept it. Again, the writer has to be "responsive," if a sociological analysis is to be made. To a certain extent, only relatively "responsive" writers get published, read, and commented on when still alive. And one needs to be "tame" in order to be embraced in the majority's taste. Too many rebellious writers have proven this point by the fact that their popularity was only posthumous.

William Golding is published and read whilst still alive, but he is by no means

tame before a relatively "tolerant" twentieth century audience, though not totally unresponsive. He does change his subject matter as well as his style, and claims to produce something different with each book. But his changes, far from being efforts to make peace with the public in the same way as some of his predecessors, are aimed at provoking the public.

Almost none of his works, including *Lord of the Flies*, which was rejected by twenty-one publishers, was "successful" the first time around. Except perhaps for *Rites of Passage*, a negative, if not furious reception seems to accompany the first appearance of most of Golding's novels. No wonder, during a radio interview when he was told that the public was offended and hated his recently published novel, his immediate response was: "Good! Good!"

Furthermore, as a "moving target," Golding not only puts himself in opposition to the readers, especially his critics, and avoids being tied down, but he also fires back. If his critics do not give him enough room to move, *The Paper Man* is the kind of answer they are likely to receive. Whether as a "passive" target or as an "active" attacker, Golding is no doubt sensitive to the public opinion, if only that his responses tend to be negative as "counteractions."

If the first chapter of the present thesis is more "counteractive" to the prevailing Western view of Golding, the third chapter is more directed against the Eastern. In spite of his fame in the West, Golding was not introduced to China until the 1980s when translations of some of his major works began to appear. While literary theoreticians in China tend to feel more at ease with Golding than with Orwell, in their belief that the former is criticising the West, whereas the latter's target is the "left," Golding's "idealistic" tendency is anything but acceptable.

In addition to the sociology of literature, Marxist literary criticism seems to be another influential force in the present thesis, though the phrase is as confusing and contains as big a variety as the former. While adopting its predominant historical attitude in examining literary works from a wider perspective, many existing criticisms of Golding's outlook as "idealistic" are critically examined. The criticism of Golding from the left tends to emphasize his alleged divorce from a necessary social context in a supra-class, supra-historical exploration of human nature. In simple terms, the question of whether society or man should come first is more like an argument about chicken and egg. Even following the convention of sociological

literary criticism, Golding, as presented in the third chapter, can be viewed as a genuine social critic. Another criticism of Golding, both in the East and, to a lesser extent, in the West, concerns the pessimism permeating his works. The historical analysis of the Fall in the second part of the last chapter attempts to address this issue, and a dialectical view seems possible. Towards the end of the last chapter, I feel compelled to make some sort of response, out of my own cultural background, to what I call Golding's "Chinese connection." Brief as it is, owing to the scope of the thesis, it is intended to bring the issue of the Fall into a wider socio-historical perspective.

Chapter 1

MOVING TARGET: A Novelist against the Tide

Even more dangerous are the post-graduate students in search of a thesis.

---William Golding, *A Moving Target*

In October, 1983, William Golding won the Nobel Prize in Literature only to become one of the most controversial and most argued about winners in the history of the award. "For the first time, the announcement provoked a rift in the secrecy that traditionally attends the Academy's proceedings."¹ Arthur Lundkvist, one of the Swedish academicians, publicly denounced the decision and described Golding as "a little English phenomenon of no special interest."² The shock wave caused by this naval veteran at the Swedish Academy may have raised a few brows in the general public, but to those who had been tumbling in the turbulent wake of Golding's literary destroyer, it came as nothing more than another ripple, and what the laureate got was not totally unexpected. To some, at least, the writer deserved his victory, which is viewed as an indication of world literature moving back in the direction of realistic fiction. The thesis will begin by presenting Golding as a dynamic writer, rather than a little phenomenon, who defies any effort to "pin him down."

¹Peter S. Prescott, "A Puzzling Literary Prize," *Newsweek* (17 Oct. 1983), p.39.

²Blake Morrison, "In Death as in the Life," *Times Literary Supplement* (2 March 1984), p.215.

In an address to *Les Anglicistes* at Rouen on 16 May, 1976, Golding brought forth a revealing characteristic of his writing and, perhaps, of his personality. At the end of that address, Golding recalled a young lady at an English university writing to him about the subject of her thesis. Her professor's recommendation for her topic had been "anyone who had known Dr. Johnson." But she had refused to write on "anything as dull as a dead man," said Golding, "She wanted fresh blood. She was going out with her critical shotgun to bring home the living. She proposed I should bare my soul, answer all her questions, do all the work, and she would write the thesis on me." However, being an "elusive" writer as he called himself, Golding "wrote back at once, saying that I agreed whole-heartedly with her professor. I was alive and changing as live things do. She would find someone who had known Dr. Johnson a most agreeable companion who would not answer back and would always stay where he was until wanted. She could guarantee filling him with a shower of critical small-shot at any time she wanted. But as for me, I am a moving target."³

Interestingly enough, the real "answer back" did come at last in the form of a novel entitled *Paper Men*. Besides all the symbolic images, on which professional exegetists are probably still working, it is at the outset a story between Barclay, a well-established English author, and Tucker, an American associate professor of English Literature, depicting the comical and typical relationship of the two. At the beginning of the novel, the drunken Barclay is shooting at a "badger" at his dustbin. The animal turns out to be Tucker, digging among the author's rubbish for material to write a biography. Then the latter makes a series of crooked attempts to make Barclay authorize him as his official biographer. Many of the tricks adopted by Tucker would fit comfortably among the thirty-six stratagems, dating back to ancient China, such as "the Ruse of Beauty" when Tucker offers Barclay his charming wife, Mary Lou; "the Ruse of Self-Sacrifice" when Tucker acts as if he has saved Barclay's "sweet life." The last of "the Thirty-six Stratagems" is "Flee, the Best Way," which is the only tactic Barclay could adopt throughout the larger part of the story. That he does, only with the biographer, or the shadow of the biographer, hot on his heels, thirsty for "fresh blood." After some confrontation, the novel ends with Barclay trying to burn the much wanted manuscripts and Tucker shooting at him, not with a "critical shotgun" this time, but, as it were, with a real "gu..." (gun).

³William Golding, *A Moving Target* (New York: Farrar, 1982), p.170.

"Answer back"---that is, one suspects, what Golding has always been doing in his career as a novelist. Apart from the counteraction on the part of the creative writer against his critic and biographer, there are, if one recalls, those of children against adults, the extinct against the surviving, the dead against the living, the disgraced against the triumphant, the loser against the winner, the mute against the articulate. And there is not necessarily one such counteraction per novel. Some of these counteractions have their targets explicitly indicated in the works while others are suggested more obliquely. One could almost be certain that there still remain targets which are known only to the author himself.

Like the fictional Barclay and like quite a few other well-known literary figures in real life, Golding has never published any autobiography. Nor does he seem too willing to discuss his ideas and experience, though more than a little of his writing is based on his own life. So, what one is left to do, with no access to the author's rubbish bin and without a shotgun, is to explore his values and tendencies in the maze of his fiction. As a literary "target," William Golding is not only alive and moving, but also, at least sometimes, deliberately "elusive." This elusive movement may be viewed at three different levels, the first of which works at the basic construction of each individual book.

Up till now, Golding has published nine novels and three short stories.⁴ And shifts and elusiveness can be seen in each one of them. It has almost become typically Goldingesque to twist the point of view towards the end of the story, a specific kind of counteraction to purposely upset the established balance. The last chapter in most of his works brings a dramatic and unexpected turn of event, throwing new light on the entire story. One of the most radical examples of this kind of dramatic ending can be found in *Pincher Martin*, which is partly why it has been chosen for a closer examination in the following chapters of the present thesis.

At the highest level, the movement, though presumably not as intentional as in a particular book, can be seen as reflected in the course of his creative career. Just like his novels, Golding's life as a writer seems also full of dramatic twists and turns, providing perhaps an suitable background for the counteractive tendencies in his writing. He started writing seriously when he was only eleven. His life-time

⁴The present thesis will concentrate on Golding's novels, because they make up the major part of his creative writing.

dream is said to have been to become a poet, but he has never quite accomplished it apart from one published collection. His failure in drama is almost as devastating, despite a brief period of acting and a relatively positive response to the production of *Brass Butterfly*. Even as a novelist, Golding did not get published until 1954 when he reached the age of forty-three. However, in spite of this rather late start, he was already thinking about winning the Nobel Prize in Literature,⁵ before he put a word on paper for his first published novel, *Lord of the Flies*, which was initially rejected by a total of twenty-one publishers. Almost thirty years later in 1983, his dream came true, largely because of that first book, which has sold over twenty million copies worldwide. Yet, at this climax, or maybe anticlimax after a long wait, of his literary career, the overjoyed Golding counteracts, publishing, some three months after the award, *The Paper Man*, aiming at the critical academic circle, which brings out the middle, and the most important, level of his movement.

Golding does not believe in writing two novels only to resemble each other. Whether he does what he claims to do, different critics hold different opinions. But one thing seems to draw consensus: practically no novel of Golding came out either in the shape or at the time it is expected. Both in time and in space, Golding's novels are so differently set that the reader, if he moved from one novel to the next in short intervals, would almost be left breathless. Indeed, the jump, from a future war (*Lord of the Flies*)⁶ to a prehistoric Neolithic age (*The Inheritors*), from the confine of a ship (*Rites of Passage*) to a world-wide chase (*Paper Men*), seems at once purposeful and natural, setting all professional Golding experts constantly at work to determine the significance of his unpredictable shifts and departures. As common in all great writing, any attempt to pigeonhole Golding will prove extremely difficult. For example, does one classify *The Pyramid* as more sociological or psychological? *The Spire* fits equally well into the categories of religion, history, psychoanalysis and philosophy. The settings, in time, range over hundreds and thousands of years of human history, and in space, cover the entire universe, even with a glimpse of the magnificence of cosmic and astronomical power over worldly matters. For instance, after the death of Simon:

⁵William Golding in *Conversation with Stephen Medcalf* (Wiltshire: The British Council, 1977), p.9.

⁶It is believed by most including the author himself that the book is set in a future world war. See Samuel Hynes, *William Golding* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press), p.6. The plausibility of this will be discussed later in the chapter.

Somewhere over the darkened curve of the world the sun and moon were pulling; and the film of water on the earth planet was held, bulging slightly on one side while the solid core turned. The great wave of the tide moved further along the island and the water lifted. Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures, itself a silver shape beneath the steadfast constellations, Simon's dead body moved out towards the open sea.⁷

By mingling the supernatural with the scientific, Golding seems attempting, successfully or not so successfully, to portray every realm of human existence---life and after-life. His heroes include children, adolescents, adults, old people and include Pharaohs, priests, artists, sailors.

Very much because of the almost unmanageable variety of his subject matter, labelling Golding with literary terms is also difficult. For a considerable period of time, all these complicated stories have been somehow referred to by most critics as "fables." In an attempt to distinguish fable from fiction, John Peter gives his definition of the former:

Fables are those narratives which leave the impression that their purpose was anterior, some initial thesis or contention which they are apparently concerned to embody and express in concrete terms. ... Fables, starting from a skeletal abstract, must flesh out that abstract with the appearance of 'real life' in order to render it interesting and cogent.⁸

However, applied to the twentieth century, fables have taken on more "flesh" and more complex skeletons. One could hardly compare *Animal Farm* with, for example, *Aesop's Fables*. That is why critics such as Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor hesitate between the term "fable" and words like "myth" and "history."⁹ Since genre study and classification is not the major concern of the present thesis, one could probably create a few sub-genres to represent different emphases in Golding's works, such as "mythical" fable and "historical" fable, and leave the issue at that. In fact, the term "novel" is more often used than not, though in the general sense of the word as a "story" rather than the narrow meaning of "fiction" adopted by John Peter. The major disagreement about Golding's works seems to centre upon their moral implications.

⁷ *Lord of the Flies*, p.170. Similar scenes also appear after the end of Lok in *The Inheritors*.

⁸ John Peter, "The Fables of William Golding," *Kenyon Review*, XIX (Autumn, 1957), pp. 557-558.

⁹ Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor *William Golding: A Critical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), pp.239-57.

Some commentators treat Golding as a "religious" writer, as the novelist calls himself, trying to preach the paradisaical myth and divine providence. Some consider him a philosopher,¹⁰ trying to work out the nature of being. Some take him as a moralist, fighting the rational development of human society. In the West, Golding is often described as a conservative Calvinist,¹¹ running against liberal ideals prevailing in Europe since the Enlightenment. To the Chinese Marxist, he is a subjective idealist,¹² especially with regard to his one-sided view of human nature.

Based on *Lord of the Flies*, which has been used as a school textbook in the West and which is the only book by Golding most people have read, there is the popular assumption that Golding is a writer of children's stories. This leads to the association of Golding's works with simplicity. It is to a large extent true that, as far as setting, action, and characterization are concerned, Golding's works are somewhat "simplified." However, this simplification does not mean that his books are simple. Golding's themes are more complicated than those of most of his contemporaries. Apart from *Lord of the Flies*, which, as will be demonstrated subsequently, can hardly be called a children's story,¹³ his works can be rated among the most difficult in this century and deserve to be examined with more allowance than they have already received.

One of the ideas about Golding's "simplicity" comes with the assumption that he is very much ^{involved} into the Christian religion. In this assumption, one tends to ignore the fact that, as a moving target, Golding is one of the most dynamic literary figures in the century. In spite of his reputation as a "religious man," Golding's background and experience do not seem to have particularly much to do with religion. His parents were both middle-class intellectuals, with a strong leaning towards liberalism.¹⁴ Except for a period of teaching at a Catholic school, the

¹⁰M. Zinde, "The Philosophical Parables of William Golding," *Twentieth Century English Literature: A Soviet View* (Moscow: Progress Publishing House, 1982), pp.272-87.

¹¹Francis E. Kearns, "Salinger and Golding: Conflict on the Campus," in *Source Book*, ed. Nelson, p.148.

¹²Liu Ruoduan, "Golding the Fabulator," *World Literature*, III (June, 1984, pp. 101-120, in Chinese). This is a Marxian term used in China to criticise one who attempts to discuss human nature outside the context of social environment.

¹³A discussions in this respect follows later in the chapter.

¹⁴James R. Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, No.28-2 (Summer 1982), p.130.

greater part of Golding's life was spent in a wide and wildly changing cultural environment typical of twentieth-century Europe. However, his writing is anything but secular---it is filled to the brim with religious and mythical imagery. Some works, such as *The Inheritors* and *The Scorpion God*, are themselves set in the ancient and mythical past. Even those treating modern subjects are laden with names and stories from Christian, Greek, Roman, Egyptian mythologies: *Beelzebub*, Prometheus, and the glorious image of Abraham sacrificing Isaac on the very first page of *The Spire*, not to mention the many direct references to the literally ubiquitous God.

Some of these images directly interfere with the development of the story, even stepping out to speak, as perhaps for example, when "the Lord of the Flies" professes himself to be part of man. Some play a significantly symbolic role, such as the black lightning in *Pincher Martin*, and the burning bush in *Darkness Visible*. Most critics in the West accept the view that a predominant theme with Golding, especially in his earlier works, is original sin. With this heavily allegorical theme, which is extremely ancient,¹⁵ expressed in Victorian realistic prose, such as adventure stories, Golding's works can be viewed as counteractive in or swimming against the main-stream of modernist literature.

From a Goldingesque point of view, the original sin committed by Adam and Eve consists neither in their general misbehaviour against God's discipline, nor in the specific act of stealing itself. Their sin lies in their inability to resist evil, in their pride, in the fact that, by eating from the Tree of Wisdom, they acquire the ability to judge, thus placing themselves on the same level, if not the same position, as God. Once God's authority is abandoned, the self is elevated. This leads to conflicts between men's self interests. Biblical stories like Cain killing his brother Abel are "typical" of the fallen human beings. So are many of Golding's novels. According to the writer himself, "Man produces evil as a bee produces honey."¹⁶ The spontaneity of such a production is derived from the first cosmic Fall.

In his first novel, Golding appropriates the story of *The Coral Island* by the nineteenth-century writer, R. M. Ballantyne. Even the names of some chief characters are identical. In Ballantyne's book, the heroes are united and composed,

¹⁵His antecedents in English literature can only be found, shall one say, in people like Milton and Bunyan.

¹⁶Golding, "Fable," *The Hot Gates and other occasional pieces* (London: Faber, 1965), p.87.

adjusting to their environment in an orderly manner. With their natural gift, they turned the Coral Island into their paradise. With their courage and compassion, they stand high above the native savages and are triumphant. Golding turned Ballantyne's story upside-down, inverting the original theme.

Before he wrote *Lord of the Flies*, which is set on a coral island with the same kinds of edible fruits and pigs as in Ballantyne's paradise, Golding said that he was going to write "a story about boys on an island and let them behave the way they really would."¹⁷ The story opens, as critics believe, in the imaginary World War III.¹⁸ The menace of the war makes the entire northern hemisphere unsuitable for the survival of children and makes it necessary, as happened during World War II, to evacuate a group of British boys from six to twelve years of age. On their way, the plane is shot down, the pilot, the only adult on board, killed, and the children marooned on an uninhabited island in the Pacific, creating an ideal situation for the story to develop into a typical children's adventure. However, with the choir boys headed by Jack entering the scene, what is initially a "dark" spot (p.20) grows into a total black utopia. Like savages, the children paint their faces and set up their totem. Finally, when Ralph himself is reduced to a crawling "savage" on the beach, the reader is made to see the "darkness of man's heart" (p.223).

"The Lord of the Flies," or *Beelzebub*, is the demon who once took part in Satan's rebellion against God. In Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, as well as in Golding's second novel, *The Inheritors*, this demon is the idol of pirates and savages. Here as "Lord of the Flies," Golding uses the image to symbolize the Fall of man. In the story, the children stick a spear on the ground and put a sow's head on top of it as a tribute to the mysterious "beast." The head is rotten and covered with flies, hence the name of the book.

A seemingly children's story which turns into a nightmare, the novel is highly allegorical of the Fall. When talking about the motif of his writing, Golding commented:

Man is a fallen being. He is gripped by original sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous. I accept the theology and admit the triteness;

¹⁷W. Golding, *A Moving Target* (New York: Farrar, 1982), p.163.

¹⁸Francis E. Kearns, "Salinger and Golding: Conflict on the Campus," pp. 150-51.

but what is trite is true; and a truism can become more than a truism when it is a belief passionately held. I looked round me for some convenient form in which this thesis might be worked out, and found it in the play of children. I was well situated for this, since at this time I was teaching them. Moreover, I am a son, brother, and father. I have lived for many years with small boys, and understand and know them with awful precision. I decided to take the literary convention of boys on an island, only make them real boys instead of paper cutouts with no life in them; and try to show how the shape of the society they evolved would be conditioned by their diseased, their fallen nature.¹⁹

To judge from the author's clear statements, then, on a symbolic level, the experience of the children on the island is equivalent to what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and what happened between Cain and Abel afterwards. For lack of awareness of self in relation to God and for lack of ability to resist evil, their innocence is corrupted and they fall to the miserable abyss.

Nevertheless, another look at *Lord of the Flies* might raise many questions, especially from a layman. If Golding was parodying the story of Genesis, who then is the tempter? On the island, there is no obvious evil force to corrupt the children, with the "beast" non-existent and *Beelzebub* or the Lord of the Flies only a "pig's head on a stick," not even a single female to play the part of Eve in Adam's fall. Golding does not want sex, which he regards as "relative triviality," "to complicate the issue,"²⁰ although girls were in fact evacuated from England along with boys during the last war. And if Golding is an Augustinian in believing that evil is intrinsic as a result of Adam's fall, why then are the characters not as bad as each other? Simon may be a Christ-figure and Piggy has too many faults, but Ralph is an average boy. Why is he not inclined to fall as a result of Adam's taint? Other deterministic theories also run into trouble except, perhaps, Calvinism which believes in the concept of man corrupted by himself.²¹ Golding seems to accept this concept and apply it to the twentieth-century situation. The artificial world the writer creates is pertinent only for the convenience of expression. In the second part of the novel, Simon meets the Lord of the Flies, and the latter "spoke in the voice of a schoolmaster":

'What are you doing here all alone? Aren't you afraid of me?'

¹⁹Golding, *The Hot Gates* (London: Faber and Faber: 1965), p.88.

²⁰Golding, *The Hot Gates*, p.89.

²¹The possible Calvinist tendency in Golding will be examined in Chapters 2 and 3.

Simon shook.

'There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast.'

Simon's mouth laboured, brought forth audible words.

'Pig's head on a stick.'

'Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!' said the head ... 'You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, Close, Close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?' (p.158)

More than a few articles have discussed the Calvinistic tendency of Golding's religious ideology.²² Golding has been many times quoted as saying: "I regard myself as a religious, but possibly incompetently religious man."²³ His "incompetence" lies in his using the religious prototype whenever necessary, provided his perception and observation of the contemporary world can be properly conveyed in it and understood by the largely Christian Western audience. However, according to John M. Egan, *Lord of the Flies* is "a novel which offers a world view far removed from the Christian."²⁴ Through the Biblical references in his novels, Golding is first and foremost portraying human rather than supernatural beings. The figures are extremely true to life, just like many Western works of art, especially during the Renaissance, when religious and archetypal imagery was used largely for the purpose of conviction and glorification of human virtues. In this way, by using religious imagery for a humanistic purpose and artistic expression, Golding might even be seen as being as much a religious writer as Leonardo da Vinci is a religious painter, though from widely different social and historical contexts.

Golding was writing "with the eyes of someone who has seen the Empire crumble and witnessed twentieth century manifestations of Original Sin."²⁵ The pessimistic ending of the novel, with no sign of any hope for redemption through

²²Such as Francis E. Kearns.

²³Sam Hynes, "Novels of a Religious Man," *Commonweal*, LXXI (18 March 1960), p.673.

²⁴"Golding's View of Man," in *Source Book*, ed. Nelson, p.146.

²⁵Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub, *The Art of William Golding* (New York: Harcourt, 1965), p.38.

grace, is perhaps another indication of its being twentieth-century, offering "a world view far removed from the Christian."²⁶ Once the true picture of the twentieth century is presented, one can hardly be contained in the straight jacket of religion. While parodying a past tradition which incorporates the Bible and mythologies, a writer has to be faithful to the present-day reality which brings to mind war and violence.²⁷ Underneath Golding's religious tip of the iceberg, there is a multi-dimensional scene of the contemporary society, which, more than anything else, highlights the imperfection of Man.

Man's imperfection, nevertheless, is not always a bad thing in Golding's novels. The hero in *Pincher Martin* is dead on the very second page of the novel, but his imperfect spirit hangs on to a rock in the middle of the ocean. When God asks him to repent he shouts: "I will not consider! I have created you and I can create my own heaven."²⁸ In the face of death and Hell, Martin's rebelliousness brings to mind, once again after "the Lord of the Flies," the image of Satan. By saying that God is created by man, Martin is not only expressing the view of a scientific atheist, but also fighting against God, against religious oppression on behalf of the entire "sinful" mankind. In *Pincher Martin*, the hero, more than once, utters the name "Prometheus." To suggest that what Martin, the Pincher, does has any connection with the heroic Greek demigod means putting God in the position of the ruthless Zeus.²⁹ This "questioning" of God points to a pluralistic attitude which is often taken as part of the biblical tradition. The fact that Golding emphasizes the the darkness of man's heart does not in any exclusive sense make Golding a religious man.

Before going into the social dimension of man's evil nature, it may be worthwhile to look at the secular tradition regarding this concept both in the East and in the West. Based on his observation that men were by nature different from each other and evil in the world of sense, Plato preached for his ideal republic a comprehensive system of education. Only when men reached the true world of ideas

²⁶John M. Egan, "Golding's View of Man," p.140.

²⁷An interesting analysis in this respect can be found in the above mentioned book by Oldsay and Weintraub.

²⁸*Pincher Martin*, Faber, p.196.

²⁹The analogy is examined in detail in the following chapter.

and reason, could their evil nature be overcome.³⁰

Roughly one hundred years after Plato, in the 200s B.C., Hsun Tzu, a Chinese philosopher, said something similar:

The nature of man is evil; his goodness is the result of his activity. Now, man's inborn nature is to seek for gain. If this tendency is followed, strife and rapacity result and deference and compliance disappear. By inborn nature one is envious and hates others. If these tendencies are followed, injury and loyalty and faithfulness disappear. By inborn nature one possesses the desires of ear and eye and likes sound and beauty. If these tendencies are followed, lewdness and licentiousness result, and the pattern and order of propriety and righteousness disappear. Therefore to follow man's nature and his feelings will inevitably result in strife and rapacity, combine with rebellion and disorder, and end in violence. Therefore there must be the civilizing influence of teachers and laws and the guidance of propriety and righteousness, and then it will result in deference and compliance, combine with pattern and order, and end in discipline. From this point of view, it is clear that the nature of man is evil and that his goodness is the result of activity.³¹

Thomas Hobbes, as secular a philosopher as Hsun Tzu, expressed the same idea most succinctly:

During the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man.³²

This tradition, which has long been abandoned in the East owing to the predominance of main-stream Confucianism, was carried on in the West, though only as a side-stream after the Enlightenment, and re-enforced by modern scientific developments. Darwin's theory of natural selection, especially, in Spencer's words, "survival of the fittest," has been somewhat twisted by social Darwinists to justify racial discrimination and national oppression. When Golding uses it to explain the history of human development, again a counteraction to invoke an idea that has been largely out of fashion in intellectual circles for most of this century, it appears to hold more than a grain of truth. In opposition to H. G. Wells' claims in *The Outline of History*: that the Neanderthal extinction was the result of their savagery, Golding, in his novel, *The Inheritors*, depicts the primitive race as innocent and

³⁰S. E. Frost, *Basic Teachings of the Great Philosophers* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), p.24 and p.211.

³¹Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), p.128.

³²Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), p.82.

good-natured. They were living a peaceful, harmonious life in their own territory until *Homo sapiens* invaded them—the fitter destroyed the nobler. "Just as bad money drives out good so inferior culture drives out superior."³³

Developments in modern psychology, especially Freudianism, have been taken as reaffirming the evil nature of man from inside him. Freud believed, later in his life, in the importance of Thanatos. The inevitable regression of all living creatures towards the original, the inorganic form, death, conditions human beings in a desire to destroy.³⁴ The children in Graham Greene's story "The Destructors"³⁵ are probably driven by this unnamed, unreasoned desire in their carefully planned action to demolish a house. The same assumption may be observed in some other literary works published in the 1950's when *Lord of the Flies* appeared. A few critics did apply the Freudian principle to Golding's novel and some even described the chief characters Jack, Ralph and Piggy in terms of their respective embodiment of "id, ego, and superego."³⁶

On one occasion, Golding denied that his works were influenced by major scientific and ideological developments in the modern age.³⁷ However, Golding's pen does seem conditioned partly by the traditional view regarding human nature, partly by the twentieth-century environment---a combination of the two produce the theme of the darkness of man's heart that runs through all his creative works. And this theme, for a period of time, appears to become more and more explicit.

Free Fall, as the title itself clearly suggests, is about a young man's Fall out of his free will. Like Martin, Sammy Mountjoy is a thief and a liar. He seems bent on destroying everything he has owned and experienced: the slum, the church, the communist party, girl-friends, and comrades-in-arms. The contemporary lunatic asylum and the dark prison cell with its hidden terror tell the modern man that

³³Golding, *The Hot Gates*, p.132.

³⁴J. A. C. Brown, *Freud and the Post-Freudians* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p.27.

³⁵Graham Greene, *Collected Stories* (London: Bodley Head, 1972), pp.324-46.

³⁶For instance, E. L. Epstein, "Notes on *Lord of the Flies*," in the Capricorn Books edition of *Lord of the Flies* (New York: Putnam, 1959); and Claire Rosenfield, "'Men of a Smaller Growth': A Psychological Analysis of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*," *Literature and Psychology*, XI (Autumn 1961), pp. 93-96, 99-101.

³⁷Golding, *A Moving Target*, pp.186-187.

innocence and freedom are but relative and temporary, whereas corruption and destruction are absolute and inevitable.

The Spire, Golding's fifth novel, tells the story of the medieval English people building the spire of the Salisbury Cathedral. At first sight, this creative effort should appear to represent the glorious human endeavour to reach up to God, an apparent opposite to the downward motion in a "Free Fall." However, Jocelin, the protagonist, is nothing less than a fallen being. In order to fulfill his perverted artistic and sexual desires through religious achievements, he preys on the life and well-being of his fellow-human-beings. On his death bed, Jocelin realizes: "There is no innocent work. God knows where God may be." He admits: "Now---I know nothing at all." (p.223) He dies and the spire, a symbol of "sprouting evil,"³⁸ appears crooked and could fall at any time.

The first five novels could be seen as making up an organic whole. Placed in the perspective of Western literature and world history of the last two hundred years, these novels tend to bring out more significance than if they are viewed separately. *Lord of the Flies* was written in the aftermath of a series of economic, political and social crises. This accounts for the writer's setting his novel in a world war:

Ballantyne's island was a nineteenth-century island inhabited by English boys; mine was to be a twentieth-century island inhabited by English boys.

...

The overall picture was to be the tragic lesson that the English have to learn over a period of one hundred years; that one lot of people is inherently like any other lot of people; and that the only enemy of man is inside him.³⁹

The first part of the quotation takes a historical view of the changed world, whereas the second part is directed against some established values associated with society and nationality.

Britain at this time is no longer a glorious empire as it used to be a century ago when *The Coral Island* appeared. The reason why *The Coral Island* and other children's stories are mentioned in *Lord of the Flies* may be because these stories

³⁸Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, *William Golding: A Critical Study*, p.213.

³⁹Golding, *The Hot Gates*, p.89.

were published in the "Good Old Days." The children in Ballantyne's novel were "cleanly (cold bath recommended) and Godly---regenerate, empire building boys, who know by instinct how to turn paradise into a British protectorate."⁴⁰ They are ideal heroes in children's literature, who nonetheless also tend to arouse nostalgic feelings in adults. Golding questions the truthfulness in these ideals and tries to reveal the other side of these "paper cut-outs."⁴¹

In *Lord of the Flies*, the children are no less capable than those in *The Coral Island*. Would they not have done a lot better if they could put together Jack's tough "body," Piggy's intelligent "mind," Simon's sacred "soul," Ralph's goodwill and commonsense plus advanced democracy and technology? Unfortunately, even the children's twentieth-century stomachs cannot adjust to the fruits of "Eden"---many suffer from diarrhea. The idyllic breeze, waves and vines cause them nightmares. In the hands of the contemporary English pupils, the earthly paradise that brought cheers from the boys in *The Coral Island* is reduced to a mere slaughter ground. At the end of the story, there is a conversation between the naval officer and Ralph,

'I should have thought that a pack of British boys---you're all British aren't you?---would have been able to put up a better show than that---I mean---'

'It was like that at first,' said Ralph, 'before things---'

He stopped.

'We were together then---' The officer nodded helpfully.

'I know. Jolly good show. Like the *Coral Island*.' (pp.222-223)

The irony here in the direct reference to Ballantyne's book is most revealing and heart-rending. The tension can be relieved only by the fact that they are after all only boys---they "began to shake and sob."

When one comes to *Pincher Martin*, the problem of repentance appears less simple. Again, a Briton on an island, Robinson Crusoe of two centuries ago was full of life. He was a representative of the rising bourgeoisie, able to survive in any part of the globe. Like the children in *The Coral Island*, Robinson Crusoe conquered both nature and man (Friday).

⁴⁰Frank Kermode, "Coral Islands," *The Spectator*, CCI (22 Aug. 1958), p.257.

⁴¹*The Hot Gates*, p.88.

The inexhaustible vitality, the self disciplined ability to work for a far off objective, and the capacity to work experimentally and selectively, learning from each experience, were neither exclusively nor universally bourgeois virtues, but they were typically such at the beginning of the 18th century. It is that reality which gives its greatness to this truthful myth of the first post revolutionary capitalist era.⁴²

In the twentieth century, the myth is evaporating and the "vitality" is becoming exhausted. What makes "an adventurous young businessman"⁴³ in the eighteenth century, only makes the killer and the killed in the twentieth: in the last two hundred years or so, just as the flag followed the trade, the merchant developed into the soldier. As a "target" or as a "destroyer," Golding moves not only in the realm of his creative activity, but also, mostly by way of parody, in a sphere far beyond his own works. Since counteraction is an important feature of his writing, the books must be viewed in their interaction with their intended, or sometimes even unintended, "targets." Between *The Outline of History* and *The Inheritors*, there is a inversion of man's values. From *The Coral Island* to *Lord of the Flies*, from *Robinson Crusoe* to *Pincher Martin*, what is unfolding before the reader's eye is, above everything else, world history which might be termed as the "Rise" and "Fall" of the modern man, or perhaps the English man.⁴⁴

Lord of the Flies is not simply a children's story. Golding is actually addressing and questioning adults. In the middle of their crisis, the children are longing for the appearance of adults (such as "father" and "auntie"). They are "striving unsuccessfully to convey the majesty of adult life":

'Grown-ups know things,' said Piggy. 'They ain't afraid of the dark. They'd meet and have tea and discuss. Then things 'ud be all right---'

'They wouldn't quarrel---'

'Or talk about a beast---'

'If only they could get a message to us,' cried Ralph desperately. 'If only they could send us something grown-up...a sign or something.' (p.103)

⁴²Annette T. Rubinstein, *The Great Tradition in English Literature from Shakespeare to Shaw* (New York: Citadel Press, 1953), p.280.

⁴³Rubinstein, p.278.

⁴⁴Golding's specific attack to his native culture, for example, the public school, the Royal Navy, the "class-ridden" society, etc., will be examined in the third chapter.

The "sign" does come when an adult lands on the island. But this adult is a corpse, not totally unlike Martin's, from the war, the "Beast from air." It only brings more terror and pushes the children further to hell and punishment.

The children are forced to the island as a result of a world war waged by adults. Besides the fact that the Lord of the Flies' "half-shut eyes were dim with the infinite cynicism of adult life," from the "scar" left by the crashed airplane in the first paragraph of the book, through the "dead parachutist" in the middle of the story, to the "trim cruiser" in the last sentence, the reader is constantly kept aware of the adult presence. The children on the island are merely enacting what the adults have always been doing. In other words, the behaviour of the adults in their world up till now is exactly like that of the children when they are depraved and devoid of all rational and moral values. The island is a miniature world, and "the child is father of the man."

Jack is at once a devil, wearing a black cloak, and a dictator, in its distinct twentieth-century sense:

Inside the floating cloak he was tall, thin, and bony: and his hair was red beneath the black cap. His face was crumpled and freckled, and ugly without silliness. Out of this face stared two light blue eyes, frustrated now, and turning, or ready to turn, to anger. (p.21)

With almost Hitlerite "uniformed superiority" and "offhand authority" (p.22), Jack is able to intimidate the weak and rule the crowd. The harsh environment⁴⁵ of the island, suggesting perhaps a period of economic depression, helps him prosper by offering "meat" to the rest of the children; the menace of the "Beast," suggesting, arguably at least, the fear of the "Reds," puts him in the position of a protector of the "littluns"; the weakness of Ralph and the sickness of Piggy, a parallel, among other possibilities, to democratic institutions and certain politicians, gives him the opportunity to rise to absolute power. Like a dictator, Jack is clever enough to invent the ideas of the totem, the ritual and the notion of the scapegoat. With an effort to eliminate his rivals, he attempts to become the sole master of the island. The statement by Pritchett: "I hope this book is being read in Germany"⁴⁶ of course only shows one side of the picture. Indeed, it should be read everywhere.

⁴⁵Though, as Whitley rightly points out, the island is also seen as idyllic and paradisaical through the writer's eye. See *Golding: Lord of the Flies* (London: Arnold, 1970).

⁴⁶V.S. Pritchett, "Secret Parables," *New Statesman* (2 Aug. 1958), p.146.

In spite of the futuristic atmosphere, especially at the opening of the novel, in spite of the generally accepted view that *Lord of the Flies* is set in World War III, the story can be said to be true only to World War II. Both the aeroplane at the beginning and the cruiser at the end reveal the reality of the last war rather than the next. It was this war that completely changed the author's outlook:

Before the second world war I believed in the perfectibility of social man; that a correct structure of society would produce goodwill; and that therefore you could remove all social ills by a reorganization of society ...

I must say that anyone who moved through those years without understanding that man produces evil as a bee produces honey, must have been blind or wrong in the head.⁴⁷

Besides Jack, many other characters allude to some prominent figures during World War II, especially those of Britain and Germany. Even though parodying history may not have been Golding's intention when writing his first novel, the reality of the second world war, which Golding witnessed and experienced, probably plays more than a casual role in the first stage of his writing.

The first five novels were published within a period of ten years. Both in content and structure, they seem to complement one another. The central theme, the Fall of man, expands beyond the realm of theology and branches out into spheres of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and, most of all, history. Their profound social and political significance puts them into the realistic tradition of the British novel, while the sophisticated implications and the modernistic technique, mingling the "pathetic" with the "grotesque"⁴⁸ in line with Orwell, set them apart from an oversimplistic or "black and white" depiction of society.

In discussing the socio-historical meaning of a literary work, there is always the danger of forgetting its artistic merits. Golding is first and foremost a good story-teller and *Lord of the Flies* a good adventure story. The plot is interesting, the characterization convincing. In view of the literary trends in the 1950s, the book stands out quite distinctly. The numerous references to pigs, especially the character "Piggy," may have some implicit connection with George Orwell's famous story. However, as a fable, *Lord of the Flies* is not as bizarre as *Animal Farm*, while as a political prophecy it seems more concretely realized than 1984. It is a

⁴⁷Golding, *The Hot Gates*, pp.86-87.

⁴⁸Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, p.145.

well-known axiom in politics that extremes meet: threats of totalitarianism and violence come not only from the left, but also from the right. By setting his action in the appropriate historical perspective, Golding fulfills what Gyorgy Lukacs prescribes as dealing with "the totality of objects," thus distinguishing himself as a realistic writer, as was rightly recognized by the Swedish Academy while awarding him the Nobel Prize.

In the twentieth century, especially after World War II, fable as a traditional literary form became popular among British writers.⁴⁹ It is well suited to the post-war situation and mentality. Golding, like the other so-called "fabulators," accepted this form by keeping its function of warning and abandoning its moralistic lecturing, leaving enough room for the reader to come to his own conclusion. With the simplified characters, usually in deep crisis, set in symbolic and limited time and space, Golding is able to raise universal questions.

In this context, one might make some sense out of some commentators' obsession with labels: "Golding had rid himself of fable and achieved, not history, but that satisfactory location in history without which myth is still fabulous."⁵⁰ In moving from fable to myth located in history, according to Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, the first five of Golding's novels have developed from "explanation" to "exploration," from "getting the right answer" to "setting the right question." The moral of Golding's stories rests mostly in his questions. While concentrating mostly on the first stage of Golding's writing, many handy references are to be made throughout the present thesis to his later works. Therefore, it would seem appropriate at this point to briefly sum up what is perceived in the theme as well as characters in his next four novels, so that when the images come up they do not appear too abrupt.

Golding's sixth novel, *The Pyramid*, though published no more than three years after *The Spire*, represents a somewhat changed approach. Set in a small town in England, ironically called "Stilbourne" (still-born), its characters and experience are far more complex than the earlier works, whereas the heavy morals are no longer there. Like *Free Fall*, it presents a young man's process of growing up, but without the symbolic implications dominating the former. Though a lot

⁴⁹Apart from George Orwell, an obvious contemporary can be found in Iris Murdoch.

⁵⁰Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, p.255.

better than Sammy in his gutter, Oliver's family background is far from satisfactory for his expensive musical and social interests. The limitation of the small family and the small town is overcome only after he goes to Oxford to study music.

At the outset, the novel is perhaps the lightest reading among all Golding's works. The tragi-comic story with occasional poetic imagery brought about by the subject of music replaces the profound and difficult messages of the first five novels. Besides touching on social issues such as stratification and materialism, Golding seems to have abandoned his heavy and gloomy theme with universal applications, for a much more existential subject popular among modern writers. Basically a *Bildungsroman*, it is largely concerned with conventional topics such as the relationship between individual and community, the process of growing up and climbing up the social ladder, the functions and effects of sexuality and homosexuality.

It is possible, of course, that Golding is deliberately diverging from the fable in order to achieve his declared object of not writing two novels alike. Or is he exhausted as a fable-writer? By simply disappearing from view, Golding makes one wonder if the so-far successful literary "destroyer" has suddenly gone under water---sunken, or turned into a "U-boat" as another tactic. In fact, a silence of twelve years did convince many of Golding's readers that he had ceased to write novels.

Surprisingly enough, in 1979, Golding moved back into the scene and published his longest novel, *Darkness Visible*. It is at once a continuation along the modernistic path of *The Pyramid* and a highly fabulistic work in line with *Lord of the Flies*. The setting is broad and the structure poetic. Matty is born from the fire of a blitz. With a half-burnt face, he looks absolutely repulsive, but his kindness is highly reminiscent of the Hunchback in *Notre Dame de Paris*. Like Victor Hugo's protagonist, he hardly utters a single word throughout the novel. Only through his diary does one realize that he is some kind of a Godsend. With a purified mind and a compassionate heart, Matty seems to have a mission to protect the weak in the world. His secret love and care for the twin sisters are shattered by the cruel reality of a corrupt world. Brought up at a home where there is a "new mum" from time to time, the twins are soon gripped with all kinds of evils. In sharp contrast to Matty, Sophy, one of the twins, is endowed with beauty and cruelty. Following various indulgences, Sophy organized a kidnapping of a foreign prince. The plan failed because of Matty's rescue.

The story is full of different points of view, which set high demands on the reader's imagination and lead him through the maze of suspense to the final revelation. The style is extremely modern, but the light reading of the *The Pyramid* is absent. Here is Golding again, using Biblical references for both the title and the structure of his story. Matty, the modern *Ezekiel*, the prophet, is born from fire and dies in fire, his cheeks burnt into two different features. He witnesses the good and evil of the human society and sacrifices himself to save man from sin. Golding is into fable again.

One year later, *Rites of Passage*, a Booker Prize winner, came out. Both in setting and in structure, it is back to the pattern of the first five novels. Limited time and space, isolated characters and happenings are what Golding is good at handling. However, the easy reading, rare in most of Golding's works, and the psychological description do indeed ring a modern tone.

Talbot is a prosperous young man on his ocean trip to Australia for an important position: "he could be Prime Minister one day," says Golding.⁵¹ Largely due to his rashness, another passenger, Father Colley, is faced with torture and humiliation, and dies in shame. The whole mystery of Colley's death is explained in the diaries of these two characters. Different points of views result in humour, satire and melancholy. With the obscurity of the Tarry language,⁵² Golding is able to keep the suspense till the final revelation.

As with many other of Golding's novels, the title is particularly meaningful. The ship crosses the equator and there is the usual ceremony aboard. At the same time, the theme and some details, such as shooting an albatross, echo Coleridge's poem "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Indeed, at the end of the novel, Talbot is a "wiser and sadder" man in a way quite similar to Coleridge's hero. The same feeling is obviously present also in Ralph, weeping "for the end of innocence," in the last chapter of *Lord of the Flies*; in Lok, waiting for the end of his race (p.221); in Sammy, realizing the inevitability of his fall; and in many other characters in Golding's novels. In a significant way, his books are, most of them, on rites of passage and concerned with the process of growing up. Passing a point of no return, Golding's characters reach their maturity only after a painful experience and a life-time lesson.

⁵¹James R. Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," *Twentieth Century Literature*, p.160.

⁵²See T. J. Binyon, "Speaking the Tarry Language," *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 Oct. 1980, p.116.

In addition to the rich allegorical imagery, the book can be read in quite a precise historical perspective as "round about 1812 or 1813."⁵³ The story, set during the Regency period in England and the Napoleonic War in Europe, is based on an actual occurrence recorded at the time by Elizabeth Longford in her biography of the Duke of Wellington.⁵⁴ While Golding's source material is not particularly the concern of the present thesis, in view of Captain Anderson's persecution of Father Colley, *Rites of Passage*, as a historical reconstruction based on solid records, makes one wonder whether there has ever been a perfect harmony between church and state.

Almost immediately following his winning the Nobel Prize, *The Paper Man*, Golding's last novel, was received with much reservation, a typical first reaction to most of his published works. It has been taken largely as a frivolous book.⁵⁵ Why not? "If I want to write something frivolous, I shall write something frivolous," said Golding in 1982.⁵⁶ But it is not as frivolous as it seems at first sight.

Apart from being an expression of the author's life-time pent-up resentment at being treated as "raw material of an academic light industry,"⁵⁷ the book is also a summary of his life---"rites of passage"---a quasi-autobiography in the form of a novel. It records the routes that he travelled both in the world and in literature---joys and pains, satisfaction and frustration. His irony and cruelty are aimed not only at the biographer but also, perhaps even more directly, at the writer himself---aimed, as in all his previous novels, at human vice. In this sense, Golding is not frivolous at all.

From *The Pyramid*, the general trend of Golding's creative writing altered, a shift of his attention from over-all issues to specific social experiences of individuals. The original moral exploration is replaced by a more subtle critique of social illnesses such as social stratification, discrimination and snobbism. The theme is

⁵³Baker, p.161.

⁵⁴The details of the incident are reproduced in Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "The Later Golding," *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, No.28-2 (Summer 1982), pp. 111-12.

⁵⁵Anthony Burgess, *The Observer*, 6 Feb. 1984.

⁵⁶Baker, p.169.

⁵⁷Golding, *A Moving Target*, p.169.

more and more hidden. Maybe man has fallen as much as he can; maybe it is an indication of cultural development and social changes: Golding has indeed moved from fable to myth. *Darkness Visible* is permeated with mysticism, the story of Matty told in dream-like encounters and as though through a fevered imagination. However, apart from the major moves---"Hard a-starboard for Christ's sake!"⁵⁸---the zig-zagging never stopped. These zig-zag moves are kept on not only to save the "target" from being "torpedoed," but also, in a symbolic sense, to save the world, as will be demonstrated below.

Riding triumphantly on the bridge of his "destroyer" as he did during the last war, Golding's criticism of the human condition and his counteraction directed at the prevailing world trend towards the liberal, the rational, the optimistic⁵⁹ are not one hundred per cent destructive. Amidst the much-noted atmosphere of despair, the writer does show tremendous concern for the future of the world. This concern comes out most obviously in Golding's treatment of children in his novels: a combination of anxiety and compassion.

Many pages in *The Inheritors* are devoted to the efforts of two surviving Neanderthals, Lok and Fa, to rescue a baby of their race captured by "the new people." Their efforts fail and end in their tragic extermination. The fate of the child is left to the reader's imagination. In a sense, the child, the only survivor of the Neanderthals, does stand the chance of living among the new people because he is only a child. If he does, all the world's people now would be partly his offsprings and hence inheritors of the nobleness of the prehistoric savages. When the child is saved, there is hope for the world.

From the initial plan to evacuate the children to the final rescue of most of them, the story of *Lord of the Flies* seems to be centred ~~round~~ a humanitarian wish: to help the young. Both Simon's and Piggy's deaths occur when they are trying to tell the truth, and both can be viewed as sacrifices towards a benevolent ~~end.~~

The opening scene of *Darkness Visible*, with a naked child running along a blitzed street away from the "burning bush," is beyond doubt a literary recreation

⁵⁸Pincher Martin, p.186.

⁵⁹All of these will be discussed in the third chapter.

of the well-known photograph taken during the Vietnam War. At first the soldiers cannot believe what they see, "since children had been the first to be evacuated from that whole area" (p.13). Then "with a positive explosion of human feeling" (p.14), the captain and his men go forward. "Now they were so near that the child was not an impossibility but a scrap of their own human flesh, they became desperate to save and serve him" (p.14). The feeling is quite a universal one as was apparent when, for instance, that Vietnam War photo was presented. And it is with this "positive explosion of human feeling" that the author expresses his desire as an old navy man to "save and serve" the children. It is with this same feeling that Matty rushes out of the blasted warehouse and saves the kidnapped child, with himself burning to death.

Apart from being a scientific "fire-giver," Piggy's Promethean image as a "helper" is displayed in his attempt to preserve "law and order." The scene with him standing on the edge of the cliff, trying to talk some sense out of the lawless mob, reminds one of the "Catcher," ^{which is} also an image on the edge of a cliff, that Holden wants to be in Salinger's novel to protect the younger children.

Worse than Holden, who ends up in a mental asylum, Piggy, "the law giver," not only fails to rescue the "littluns" from evil, but himself gets smashed and dies like a pig. This character is one of the three directly taken from *The Coral Island*. But unlike the other two, his real name is never revealed in the novel. This is not important to him: "'I don't care what they call me,' he said confidentially, 'so long as they don't call me what they used to call me at school.' ... 'They used to call me "Piggy".'" Yet that is what he is to be called.

Some critics believe that, out of his disgust with rationalism, Golding treats Piggy contemptuously.⁶⁰ True, Piggy is depicted as lazy, greedy, fat, myopic, asthmatic and the only one in the novel who babbles away in sub-standard English with a Cockney accent. The story is told largely through Ralph's point of view, with Piggy standing aside like a shadow, a supporting character. However, a more careful reading of the book may enable the reader to see Piggy as the most successfully depicted character, one who leaves the deepest impression.

The story opens with Piggy's cry: "Hi! Wait a minute!" (p.1), when he is entangled in the vines, and closes with Ralph crying over the death of "the true,

⁶⁰ Jack I. Biles, *Talk: Conversations with William Golding*, New York, Harcourt, 1970, p.12.

wise friend." Piggy ^{comes on} stage as a comic figure and dies as a tragic hero, like many good people in the world. He is the butt of jokes in the story, yet his wisdom is gradually recognized by Ralph in his efforts to establish a civilized order. This gains Piggy hatred from Jack. The reader's response to Piggy, whose final "blindness" is reminiscent of Gloucester in *King Lear*, develops with the story from irony to sympathy---when he finally walks, knowingly and bravely, to his death, he ceases to appear funny altogether. His value is felt all the more acutely after he is gone. Golding is seen as carefully and gradually presenting Piggy's different characters, reaching a climax at the end of the book.

Judging from his accent, Piggy may have been brought up in the East End. His father is dead and his mother's situation is beyond his ability to describe: "'My dad's dead,' he said quickly, 'and my mum---'" Piggy grows up with his auntie who "kept a sweet-shop." A boy from such a relatively humble background would naturally appear out of place and ridiculous among a group of public school boys. However, his honesty and loyalty to friends, his realistic and scientific thinking, his broad knowledge, and his final sacrifice do make him stand out among other children. Incidentally when he does stand, he is constantly on the left of Ralph while Jack and his "hunters" stand on the right. To say that Golding intends to present a political division of the boys may be wide of the mark. "If disaster came," says the author, "it was not to come through the exploitation of one class by another."⁶¹ Yet a certain aspect of the British society is reflected at a much simplified level in the behaviour of the children on the island.⁶² If Golding had been consciously trying to jump out of the realm of mundane existence and shut himself within mystical boundaries, he had not been very successful. Neither was he so if he had meant Piggy to be totally objectionable. Stern seems to hit upon a reasonable balance: "This boy, however, has brains, and he is almost blind. And it is his blindness, by excruciating irony, that finally saves the lives of the surviving boys, while failing to save his own. Piggy is the hero of a triumphant literary effort."⁶³

Many Western critics have compared *Lord of the Flies* with *Catcher in the*

⁶¹Golding, *The Hot Gates*, p.89.

⁶²Golding's view on the class structure of the British society will be discussed in detail in the third chapter.

⁶³James Stern, "English Schoolboys in the Jungle," *New York Times Book Review* (23 Oct. 1955), p.38.

Rye.⁶⁴ In spite of the obvious similarities between the two---years of publication, children as subject matter, huge numbers of copies sold and used as school textbooks--- these critics tend to emphasize Golding's Calvinist and Salinger's liberal tendencies. Nevertheless, from their different and contrasting social and philosophical angles, both Golding and Salinger seem to be concerned with the same insoluble conflict between man and society, as well as between men themselves, typical of the twentieth century. The human nature may be good according to Salinger, or evil according to Golding, but man is faced with the danger of corruption and destruction. That is why the future of man-kind, the fate of children, is often brought to the centre of public attention.

Lu Xun, one of the most important Chinese writers in the first half of this century and a believer in the younger generation because of the "evolution" of the human race, published in 1918 a short story entitled "A Madman's Diary." Sounding an obvious Nietzschean tone, the story is permeated with a kind of mad and fevered imagination, similar in many ways to that of Golding later in the century. It describes the history of China as four thousand years of man eating man. "How can a man like himself, after four thousand years of man-eating history." At the end of the story, Lu Xun shouts through the mouth of the madman:

Perhaps there are still children who haven't eaten men?

Save the children ...⁶⁵

This call for the same rescue is perhaps heard all over the world.

Golding seems to be asking the audience of *Lord of the Flies*: are the children being saved once they are taken away from the desert island? What appears at the end of the novel, the "huge peaked" and "white-topped cap" of the Royal Navy with its "crown," "anchor," "gold foliage," the "white drill, epaulettes, a revolver, a row of gilt buttons down the front of a uniform," and, above all, the "sub-machine gun" and "the trim cruiser"---all these much admired objects among boys seem to predict the future of these children, the fate of mankind. And all of

⁶⁴Notably John S. Whitley, *Golding: Lord of the Flies* (London: Arnold, 1970); Bernard Dick, *William Golding* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1967); and Kenneth Rexroth, "William Golding," *Atlantic*, CCXV (May 1965), p.96.

⁶⁵Lu Xun, *Call to Arms* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), p.12.

these images belong to World War II, which, to Golding, is a point of no return. The lesson he learned during the war made him all the more anxious about the human situation. Having been a school master for a considerable part of his life, Golding knows children and is concerned about them. According to some critics, if Golding believes evil to be intrinsic in human nature, then age would not make any difference---children are just as corrupt as adults. "There's not a child so small and weak But has his little cross to take."⁶⁶ Indeed, the lust for blood and violence in Jack and Roger certainly suggest something inborn and present a very gloomy picture. However, Golding does not see himself as a pessimist,⁶⁷ and, since not all the children are equally corrupt, such as Ralph, there may still be hope in the debris of destruction. In a world full of fallen men, perhaps "there are still children who haven't eaten men"---"Save the children," and, through them, save the world.

The target of Golding's counterattack is the popular Panglossian world view regarding the progress of human society---"all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds." By tracing the evil of society to the evil of man, Golding may be criticised for putting the cart before the horse. However, it often appears difficult not to read Golding in the overall social context. Raymond Williams, generally accepted as a Marxist literary critic, divides twentieth-century fiction into "social" and "personal" novels. Under the former category, he creates a subdivision which he names "social formula," as distinct from the other subdivision "the descriptive social novel, the documentary." It is within this subdivision of "social formula" that he put William Golding. He describes books like *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* as "powerful social fiction" in which "a pattern taken from contemporary society is materialized, as a whole, in another time or place." This, according to Williams, is the modern version of realism, depicting "typical characters in typical situations."⁶⁸

The last thing that Golding wants is to be categorized, and maybe the last of the last to be categorized by a Marxist exegete such as Raymond Williams, even if that means getting put together with 1984 and *Brave New World* as "serious science

⁶⁶Quoted from Walter Allen's "New Novels," *New Statesman*, XLVIII (25 Sept. 1954), p.370.

⁶⁷This aspect of Golding will be examined in the third chapter.

⁶⁸Raymond Williams, "Realism and the Contemporary Novel," in *20th Century Literary Criticism*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 580-91.

fiction,"⁶⁹ which is also a definition Kingsley Amis gives to some of Golding's novels.⁷⁰ "Science fiction" does seem to be an accurate description of certain aspects of Golding's writing. For some reason, however, neither Williams nor Amis has included in this category of science fiction Golding's third novel *Pincher Martin*. Neither have other critics, which is a pity, because apart from everything else the book is arguably the most science-fictional among the works of Golding.

Originally contemplated as another chapter of the thesis, or alternatively another section on a scientific reading in the second chapter, this feature of *Pincher Martin* would seem out of place in both. At any rate, the limited length of the thesis does not quite allow for a whole new area to be opened. Nevertheless, before moving to the next chapter, which is totally devoted to this particular novel, it appears both necessary and interesting just to explore this possibility a little, which would hopefully help to illustrate one of the contentions in this chapter that there are numerous potentials in reading Golding. Despite remarks like Bowen's that "Mr. Golding's third novel...is an overtly religious book, and cannot be read in any other way,"⁷¹ one needs to remember that Golding is a moving target.

Whether the writer intends it or not, *Pincher Martin* can be read as a science fiction, because it operates primarily on the laws of relativity, the more symbolic meaning of which is looked at in the third chapter. Without these laws, Martin's experience is almost impossible. First, there is the relative concept of time: a split second of dying infinitely extended to enable the protagonist not only to "live" on the rock, but also to "relive" his entire life as if he were travelling at a velocity faster than light on a super-Wellsian time-machine. Martin even refers to this kind of relative travelling in the book.

Second, and much more concretely, there is the relative phenomenon of space. The fact that Martin can stand on a rock created from his aching tooth and that he can see the rest of his teeth as a line of rocks is built on pure "imaginative geometry," a phrase used by Gamow.⁷² In his book, Gamow describes a mental

⁶⁹Raymond Williams, pp.580-91.

⁷⁰Kingsley Amis, *New Maps of Hell* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1960), p.24.

⁷¹John Bowen, "One Man's Meat, The Idea of Individual Responsibility," *Times Literary Supplement*, 2997 (7 Aug. 1959), p.xii.

⁷²George Gamow, *One two three...infinity* (New York: Viking, 1947), p.57.

process of stretching and turning one's own body inside out, so that "the entire universe, including the earth, moon, sun, and stars, will be squeezed into the inner circular channel!"⁷³ The process, of course, has to start from one's mouth and finish at the other end of the "tube." Then the "inside-out universe" would look something like the surrealist drawing by Salvador Dali, in which the drastically enlarged teeth become perfectly visible from the eyeball. While not quite swallowing the universe into his intestine, greedy as he is, Martin does more than once imagine this inside-out "topology," in order to have his bones cover his flesh like a lobster.

As a "projection" of his mind, the world Martin lives in is different from the ordinary. Like a shadow projected on to a wall, his existence is seen as only two-dimensional and appears naturally ridiculous to the reader "outside" who, presumably, is located in a three-dimensional space. Maybe because of this precarious survival limited to a "flat" "surface," Martin is extremely sensitive to the idea of being "erased like an error" (p.201) by the "pressure" of the "blotting paper" (p.166). He is also frightened of the Chinese, three-dimensional as the "box," whose "X-ray eyes" (p.136) could see through an inferior two-dimensional plane. When he tries to look at his facial features in the pool, surely there is only a profile: "no matter how he turned his head he could see nothing but a patch of darkness with the wild outline of hair round the edge" (p.133).⁷⁴

If in the first part of the story Martin is still able, sometimes in his imagination, to hop between the two worlds, towards the end it becomes more and more impossible: "The sea stopped moving, froze, became paper, painted paper that was torn by a black line. The rock was painted on the same paper. The whole of the painted sea was tilted but nothing ran downhill into the black crack which had opened in it" (p.200). In contrast, the "crack," obviously belonging to a superior space, is seen as "utter," "absolute," and "three times real" (p.200). This set of imagery is quite consistent throughout the novel and can be easily traced, which itself perhaps would warrant a separate thesis. Since the present one is concerned mainly with the socio-historical dimension, it must refrain from this amusing domain.

Instead of a cosmologist, Golding likes to describe himself as a physician,

⁷³Gamow, p.59.

⁷⁴Another possible meaning of this will be examined in the second chapter.

diagnosing social illnesses. Whatever the metaphor may be, Golding's patient is recognized as society, and, as a qualified doctor with experience, he seems able to feel the ~~social~~ pulse of the time. Therefore, even though he is an elusive target and a counteractive writer going against the tide, even though his diagnosis appears unpleasant, difficult and, very often, simply horrible, the mere existence of a physician is hope enough for a cure.

Chapter 2

PINCHER MARTIN: Many Faces of a Fallen Man

And of course a human brain must turn in time and the universe be muddled. But beyond the muddle there will still be actuality and a poor mad creature clinging to a rock in the middle of the sea.

---William Golding, *Pincher Martin*¹

Since the theme of Golding's novels is generally taken to be the fallen nature of man,² it would seem appropriate for a thesis on such a topic to be focused on one book of his in which man is the most fallen. The selection of such a book leads one back to his third novel, *Pincher Martin*.

Martin is the first contemporary character to appear in Golding's fiction, if one is to accept the common belief that his two previous novels are set in the future (*Lord of the Flies*)³ and in the past (*The Inheritors*). More "vicious" than, say, the children in the first novel, Martin is an adult whose profession, at the outset, is to destroy and kill his fellow men. His means of killing, a naval destroyer in modern warfare, called *Wildebeste* (reminiscent of the image of "the Beast" in the first book), is much more efficient than ever before in history, far

¹The Faber edition, 1965, p.180, which is used for all the references to *Pincher Martin*

²*William Golding: A Critical Study* by Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor is a systematic analysis of the prevailing theme of Golding's first five novels. And, as if to make such an authoritative study complete, *A View from the Spire* by Don Crompton was published posthumously in 1985, bringing it right up to date. Comments upon Golding's theme as the fall of man can also be found in Nelson's *Source Book*.

³Among other critics, Raymond Williams and Samuel Hynes pigeonholed *Lord of the Flies* as science fiction. The latter commented that by setting his action in the "future" (with England fighting "the reds" in an atomic war), Golding was "protecting his fable from literalistic judgements of details or of credibility" (*William Golding*, p.6).

exceeding the destructive potential of the bows and arrows used by *Homo sapiens* in *The Inheritors*.

Compared to characters in Golding's other novels, Martin's evil nature stands out uniquely. He is the only protagonist who is depicted as not having done anything good whatsoever in his entire life. Not having a single friend, he is the lone sinner in his world and he never repents. By an amazing feat, he breaks virtually every possible rule of human conduct and is punished. This chapter is divided into five sections based on five different ways of reading the work, and they are here termed (I) naturalistic, (II) dramatic, (III) cosmic, (IV) heroic and (V) tragic. Whether the terminology suggests theme or merely scheme, what this chapter aims at is a coherent, though by no means exhaustive, reading of the novel through close examination of the text.

Necessarily, there are a few points that need to be clarified beforehand. First of all, there is the problem^{of} the dichotomy of points of view, that of the writer and that of the reader. While it is true that after a literary work is published its interpretation is entirely up to the reader, it is also true that some authors do seem to continue their influence on the book even long after it is written. Many of Golding's seemingly off-hand remarks and comments throw more than a casual light on his works, especially on one as difficult and controversial as *Pincher Martin*.⁴

The present chapter, in exploring some of the least touched upon issues regarding this book, will try as much as possible to support its contentions by using materials from the book itself. However, it is both interesting and helpful also to notice some of Golding's own reflections on his work, particularly his essays and conversations from 1970 onwards.

The second point to be clarified concerns the readers themselves. There is the obvious difference between the average readers, the majority, so to speak, of the audience Golding is writing for, who read the work mostly for purely personal pleasure and edification; and the professional critics and literary academics who, despite the antagonism of Golding himself discussed in the first chapter, are at least the most heard. An examination of this important work would hardly be balanced if either group is ignored. In the following discussion, the first section is intended to present the picture largely perceived by the former group, whereas Sections (II)

⁴Hynes refers to it as "the most difficult of Golding's books" ("Novels of a Religious Man," p.675).

and (III) respond to the main-stream of the Golding critical industry. All three sections attempt to add new dimensions to the more or less conventional views about the work. The purpose of this, though, is to pave the way for the last two sections which try to look at the other side of the coin. Without the former, there would hardly be any reason or ground for the latter. In line with the whole thesis, these rather unconventional suggestions as to further possibilities in reading Golding and "exotic" ways of looking at the protagonist are at the most meant to be additions to rather than departures from the existing explication and criticism of Golding.

In the suggested pluralistic approach to *Pincher Martin*, especially in the transition from Section (III) to Section (IV), one major hurdle is Christianity, though the "dismantling" of it is well underway in the latter part of Section (III). As mentioned in the first chapter, the present thesis, while accepting the view that Golding interprets human experience in ways which connote a Christian framework, takes Golding's Christianity mainly in the context of his intellectual and imaginative orientation rather than as a dogmatic belief. To a great extent, it is the apparent contradictions in the writer's treatment of religious ideas which make his work all the more challenging and entertaining. And it is not without some apology that such contradictions are often reflected in and between the various sections of the present chapter, although the aim is to present a unified and at the same time enriched appreciation of this complex literary work.

(I)

The term "naturalistic" is used for this section to mean a seeming representation of life as it is, especially when such a representation is to the minutest detail, rather than in its specific literary meaning largely associated with some nineteenth-century fiction. Applied to a particular narrative, the reader is required, temporarily in the present study, to adhere to the written words. In this way, the term is almost a synonym of "realistic," which, according to Lodge's useful working definition, is "*the representation of experience in a manner which approximates closely to descriptions of similar experience in nonliterary texts of the same culture.*"⁵ The term "realistic," however, is not used here, partly because

⁵David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p.25.

Pincher Martin does not explicitly and consistently approximate to any non-literary text, such as a naval officer's report; partly because the term "realism" tends to imply a more austere literary convention in certain cultures (for example the author's own, as in phrases like "social" or "socialist" realism); partly because the thesis does not intend to suggest that the other readings of Golding are any less "realistic." In fact, different levels of reality highlight different focuses in reading the novel and serve as a vital link between the first two sections. In the third chapter, "realism" is used largely in the above sense to cover an over-all feature of Golding's writing.

The majority of people read novels simply for the plot. Therefore, the first and most obvious understanding of *Pincher Martin* is obtained by following the story from the first page to the last---the naturalistic level of Golding's expression. Most careful readers would be reasonably satisfied with the clarity of Golding's narrative in *Pincher Martin*, which tells the story of a naval officer stranded on a rock in the Atlantic, especially if they have heard of Golding's inclination to obscurity. Being "an unusually disciplined, schematic writer," Golding has a "desire to have his works read with the same kind of conscious intelligence."⁶ When they reach the last sentence, or even the last word, some careless readers may be more than a little puzzled over the mention of the seaboots if they have missed the concealed and scattered clues about Martin's death earlier in the book. The following comment, however, is not from a careless reader: "The revelation about the seaboots, unpleasantly like a trick ending, could be adapted to at least two interpretations which accept Martin as having survived on the rock over a period of days. The clues planted to show unreality (the red lobster, the solid guano, the flying lizards) could be explained by madness, the stress of hanging on. In fact, at one point such an interpretation is suggested."⁷ The naturalistic reading intended in this section takes Martin as having survived on the rock.

In spite of the mystery and contradicting images, very few readers nowadays would bother to read the whole story again. For those whose cultural background is at variance with Golding, those whose understanding of human existence and death is drastically different from that of Westerners, a second reading might give rise only to more confusion. Commenting on his "reversal point of view towards

⁶Samuel Hynes, *William Golding* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1964), pp.3-4.

⁷John Atkins, "Two Views of Life: William Golding and Graham Greene," *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Vol.8, No.1 (Spring 1980), pp.85-86.

the end," Golding admits: "the reader could only understand the book properly if he went back and read it all over again. I can understand readers being faintly indignant at that. You don't expect to read a man twice. There are very few people worth reading twice."⁸ In all probability, some readers are prepared for and may even welcome a certain amount of difficulty in understanding a book, especially in the age of modernism, when appreciation is often seen as a possibility not necessarily resulting from comprehension. For instance, while the book is recognized as "the best of Golding's novels,"⁹ even some people in the West never realize after reading the whole book that Martin was killed on the very second page.¹⁰ That is probably why, when the book was published in the United States, the name was changed into *The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin* to make it clearer. It is this significant probability that makes the "misreading" worth exploring, especially since it is the accepted reading that has largely prevented the reader from appreciating some of the most accomplished features of Golding's narrative. In describing Martin's "survival" story, Golding uses the technique of naturalistic reproduction of which only some one with extensive seafaring experience is capable. If the reader is informed of the protagonist's death, he would most likely focus his attention on clues to this fact, rather than on the description of "survival."

However, if the readers, such as those from a non-Christian cultural background, have no idea of all the possible implications and simply follow the obvious "plot" of the story, "we feel in their grandeur and terror the realities of rock, sky, and sea; the pressure on a man of a Nature crushingly alien to him; the struggle to stay alive and sane; the physical and mental deterioration; the madness that is convincing on a naturalistic level before it is anything else."¹¹ Martin, a temporary lieutenant of the Royal Navy, is thrown overboard when his destroyer is hit by a German torpedo. It is at this point that the book begins and the first chapter is a good example of Golding's naturalistic skills and hence is looked at in some detail here. In spite of the highly subjective and impressionistic overtone in the description, the immediate panic over the loss of air is impressively captured by the writer:

⁸James R. Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, No.28-2 (Summer 1982), p.169.

⁹Ralph Freedman, "New Realism: the Fancy of William Golding," *Source Book*, ed. Nelson, p.44.

¹⁰*Newsweek*, 17 Oct. 1983, p.39.

¹¹Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, *William Golding: A Critical Study* (London: Faber, 1967), p.121.

He hunched his body towards the place where air had been but now it was gone and there was nothing but black, choking welter. His body let loose its panic and his mouth strained open till the hinges of his jaw hurt. Water thrust in, down, without mercy. Air came with it for a moment so that he fought in what might have been the right direction. But water reclaimed him and spun so that knowledge of where the air might be was erased completely. (p.1)

While drowning is nothing new in literature, this description of Martin's desperate search for the right direction certainly adds new immediacy to the effort at survival. Amidst hallucinations and temporary passivity, Martin manages to remove his seaboots and inflate his lifebelt, the most obvious things to do in order to keep afloat in water. During his arduous and exhausting ordeal, some minute details of the ocean world are presented not without a purpose: "His mouth was needlessly open and his eyes so that he had a moment of close and intent communion with three limpets, two small and one large, that were only an inch or two from his face. Yet this solidity was terrible and apocalyptic after the world of inconstant wetness" (p.22). The feeling brought by this solidity amidst wetness is the same as the one roused by the slimy jelly in the middle of intense starvation. This unusual focus of attention on limpets, of all things, when what he needs is air, can be viewed as a sign of relaxation in the middle of the struggle. It could be the result of giving up in despair, or, more likely, it could be a recognition of hope---light-coloured limpets only visible against the dark background of a rock. Finally, after nearly twenty pages of this heart-rending struggle, Martin gets to a rock in the ocean:

There were hard things touching his face and chest, the side of his forehead. The sea came back and fawned round his face, licked him. He thought movements that did not happen. The sea came back and he thought the movements again and this time they happened because the sea took most of his weight. They moved him forward over the hard things. Each wave and each movement moved him forward. He felt the sea run down to smell at his feet then come back and nuzzle under his arm. It no longer licked his face. There was a pattern in front of him that occupied all the space under the arches. It meant nothing. The sea nuzzled under his arm again.

He lay still. (pp.22-23)

As soon as Martin recovers his strength, he very sensibly starts organizing for himself shelter, food, water and then a signal to attract would-be rescuers. During all this time, he makes conscious efforts to keep his sanity, largely by logical thinking. Besides working days, he specially sets a day for thinking.

'I am busy surviving. I am netting down this rock with names and taming it. Some people would be incapable of understanding the importance of that. What is given a name is given a seal, a chain. If this rock tries to adapt me to its ways I will refuse and adapt it to mine. I will impose my routine on it, my geography. I will tie it down with names. If it tries to annihilate me with blotting-paper, then I will speak in here where my words resound and significant sounds assure me of my own identity. I will trap rain-water and add it to this pool. I will use my brain as a delicate machine-tool to produce the results I want. Comfort. Safety. Rescue. Therefore tomorrow I declare to be a thinking day.'

(pp.86-87)

In order to make his environment tamer and more governable, Martin gives names to different parts of the rock, such as "High Street," "Oxford Circus," "Piccadilly" and "Leicester Square." By doing this he also keeps his association with and memory of the world, particularly London, with which he is most familiar, so that his sanity is preserved. This idea of the importance of names to human behaviour dates back at least two thousand years. Confucius meant exactly that when he said: "There must be correct names. If names be not correct, language accords not with truth. If language accords not with truth, affairs cannot achieve success."¹² In Martin's case, as in that of Crusoe, the naming of things is a convenient way to tie the place down and make a harsh environment more inhabitable.

Martin emulates Robinson Crusoe in making full use of his "education and intelligence and will" (p.80). In fact, in his efforts to survive, Martin is much tougher than his predecessor over two hundred years before. On a bare rock, he finds food and catches water. In order to be rescued, he even erects a stone statue which he calls "the Dwarf" and covers its head with a foil from chocolate wrapping to reflect sun light. What is more, for attention from the sky, he works hard to create a sign of the cross on the rock with seaweed. "I must make it at least a yard wide and it must be geometrically straight. Later I will fill up one of the trenches and turn the upright into a cross" (p.109).

All this makes the reader wonder: could Robinson Crusoe have done any better in Pincher Martin's place? Considering the twentieth-century comfort Martin must be used to and the barrenness of the rock, his toughness and will power in surviving seem even more remarkable than those of Crusoe of the eighteenth century. The following passage provides a fair idea as to what Martin has to eat in order to keep himself alive:

¹²Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D.C.Lau (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1979), p.120.

He climbed down the rock again to where he had prised off the limpet. He made a wry face and pushed his doubled fist into the damp cloth over his belly. He hung on the little cliff and began to tear away the blobs of red jelly with his fingers. He set them on the edge of the cliff and did not look at them for a while. Then he turned his one and a half eyes down to them and inspected them closely. They lay like a handful of sweets only they moved ever so slightly and there was a little clear water trickling from the pile. He sat by them on the edge of the cliff and no longer saw them. His face set in a look of agony. (pp.65-66)

In this picture, what the reader perceives is not a modern man who would have no place on a bare rock, but a savage with no trace of civilization confronted with raw limpets. The use of fingers seems quite significant in this respect.

His fingers closed over a sweet. He put it quickly in his mouth, ducked, swallowed, shuddered. He took another, swallowed, took another as fast as he could. He bolted the pile of sweets then sat rigid, his throat working. He subsided, grinning palely. He looked down at his left hand and there was one last sweet lying against his little finger in a drip of water. He clapped his hand to his mouth, stared over the fingers, and fought with his stomach. He scrambled over the rocks to the water-hole and pulled himself in. Again the coils of red silt and slime rose from the bottom. There was a band of red round the nearer end of the pool that was about half an inch across.

When he had settled his stomach with the harsh water he came out of the hole backwards. (p.66)

The convincing description of a conscious effort at survival is only one episode that reveals the writer's experience and anxious imaginings when he was at sea. With him, the reader not only has to go through the desperation of sinking into the cold darkness of the sea, the fatigue of floating, the hardness of the rock, and the loneliness of survival, but also has to taste the repulsiveness of raw limpets and foul water. Only through such descriptions can one become fully aware of the power of Golding's naturalistic expression. The painful experience of reading *Pincher Martin* is only relieved from time to time by the hero's reflections upon his past. These sometimes sober, sometimes delirious streams of consciousness reveal the worst side of Martin so as perhaps to relieve the reader a little of the heavy feeling of his or her natural sympathy.

Yet, ironically, it is this worst side of Martin that the reader tends to identify with, and it is this side that is said to be mostly based on the writer's own life, making the protagonist appear true to life. By providing a dimension of time, this side of Martin gives meaning to the naturalistic presentation of his drowning and survival, bringing them into relief. In other words, Martin's effort to stay alive is a

natural continuation, rather than an impulsive display of will power, of a life-time struggle against odds. In a conversation with Stephen Medcalf in 1977, Golding almost agreed that, in the interviewer's words, "there's a very peculiar relation between that [*Pincher Martin*] and autobiography, in the sense that almost all the external things that happen to Pincher Martin, all his life up to the moment when we first see him, is very much derived from [Golding's] own [experience]."¹³

Golding especially confirmed the autobiographical description of Martin's memory of his childhood: the hot nights, the fear of the cellar and the darkness beneath the house. One also knows that, like Martin, Golding used to be an actor and now a writer. Martin's other memories of the navy no doubt also have their roots in Golding's life, except, as he said, "Obviously, I haven't drowned, which is what Pincher Martin did."¹⁴ What is not so clear is some of the hero's experiences between his childhood and the navy: to what extent are these of Martin's memories autobiographical, such as his quasi-friendship with Nathaniel, his successful and not-so-successful love affairs and, above all, his philosophy of the maggots?

It is here that one gets to see all the evil side of Martin, the "pincher." At this level, what is being discussed is not yet the religious implications of the word "evil," not in the sense of a breach of the Ten Commandments, but the purely moral and humanitarian connotations of Martin's bad qualities. If Golding can feel satisfied when he sees people identifying themselves with Martin, saying "we are just like that," why should Martin's misdeeds be taken so seriously? Certain social norms dictate that everything is all right as long as one does not get caught, and that is the one thing Martin never does for the first part of his short life.

Alfred may be furious, Helen may be jealous, Nathaniel may be cheated, Mary may be offended, but is it Martin's fault? In a world where only the fittest survive, Martin, terrified by the dark cellar (childhood), abandoned by his friend (Helen), tricked by his enemy (George), can do nothing but live like a maggot---"eat or be eaten."¹⁵ In fact, the more one reads *Pincher Martin*, the more one tends to sympathize with the hero and share his agony.

¹³William Golding in *Conversation with Stephen Medcalf* (Wiltshire: British Council, 1971), p.1.

¹⁴William Golding in *Conversation with Stephen Medcalf*, p.1.

¹⁵A further discussion of this is left till the third chapter.

'Oh help, help! I am dying of exposure. I am starving, dying of thirst. I lie like driftwood caught in a cleft. I have done my duty for you and this is my reward. If you could only see me you would be wrung with pity. I was young and strong and handsome with an eagle profile and wavy hair; I was brilliantly clever and I went out to fight your enemies. I endured in the water, I fought the whole sea. I have fought a rock, and gulls and lobsters and seals and a storm. Now I am thin and weak. My joints are knobs and my limbs like sticks. My face is fallen in with age and my hair is white with salt and suffering. My eyes are dull stones--- ... ---my chest is like the ribs of a derelict boat and every breath is an effort---' (p.188)

Despite a certain degree of self-pity, this is a Royal Navy officer speaking, or, as it were, William Golding himself speaking as a former naval officer. To the sea? To the rock? To some supernatural being? But then, why "fight your enemy"? The second world war was any thing but a fight between Christians and pagans. From this phrase, one could probably infer that Martin may be speaking to the people who have treated him badly and, through them, to his mother country, Britannia, who takes his sacrifice for granted.¹⁶ He could be speaking to the readers who have never experienced the horrors of the sea. "All you people in warm beds, a British sailor isolated on a rock and going mad not because he wants to but because the sea is a terror---the worst terror there is, the worst imaginable" (p.187). Therefore, before one condemns Martin, before one ridicules him for his blind stubbornness in clinging on, there is perhaps room for the reader to be put in his position. After all the efforts, Martin goes mad and dies an agonizing death. Why should it be him? Does he deserve all that?

The story of Martin is complete only towards the end of the novel when the reader learns how the protagonist is thrown overboard, an event which takes place before the story begins, and may be summarized as follows. Voluntarily, or involuntarily in retrospect, Martin goes to sea to fight the enemy of civilization, risking his life. As a competent naval officer, he is the first and the only one to sight some suspicious "wreckage" floating just under the surface near his ship (p.101), which is most likely the U-boat that later torpedoes Martin's destroyer. However, his report of the sighting is only treated with "contempt and disbelief" (p.102) from the gin-soaked captain, which arouses in Martin strong indignation---"heat and blood" (p.102). Finally, out of his jealousy of Nathaniel over Mary, Martin tries to destroy his rival, "swaying and spread-eagled" (p.184), by giving an order to turn the ship suddenly "hard a-starboard" (p.186). Just then

¹⁶Golding's attitude towards his home country is discussed in the third chapter.

the ship is hit by a torpedo before she could make the turn which would have saved her. That is why before sinking, Martin utters: "And it was the right bloody order!" (p.186). The obvious question is: if Martin's intention is totally bad, why does Golding make his last order a correct one? If he had given the order a little earlier, he would have killed Nathaniel and saved the ship.

The complete story, told in fragments and often in a reverse order, of Martin in the Royal Navy presents the image of an officer, with all his faults, both worthy of his rank in maritime warfare and worthy of his nationality in the ability to survive in distress. The latter, though subject to the most ridicule, can be seen to bring out an even more remarkable quality in a man than the former. Golding's success with the book partly lies in his naturalistic description of a human being struggling against nature. At this level, Martin's experience is at once from a self-centred obstinacy and out of a purely natural instinct of biological sustenance. Hynes poses the right question when analyzing *Pincher Martin*: "how can we not side with Man, against Nature?"¹⁷

(II)

Life would be too easy if one had only to choose between Man and Nature, and *Pincher Martin* is not as simple as that. The second choice facing the reader is that between different realities. All seems reasonable until the last word of the novel in the sentence: "He didn't even have time to kick off his seaboots" (p.208). With this word "seaboots," comes a new reality. Before this, the reader has felt dizzy being tossed around on the rock with Martin on the one hand, and back and forth in Martin's life with Golding on the other. Now one is faced with another reality.

From the beginning of the last chapter, everything becomes suddenly fresh. The storm has died down and the fevered perception is gone. The new reality facing the audience is far more familiar and comfortable, like a sudden clearing after a violent storm. "There was a leaden tinge to the water except in the path of the drifter---a bright valley of red and rose and black that led back to the dazzling

¹⁷Hynes, *William Golding*, p.25

horizon under the sun" (p.202). Based on logical deduction, Officer Davidson's assurance that Martin did not suffer at all throws a totally different light on the story, turning an agonizing experience of survival into nothing more than a fantasy, a sheer piece of bathos. Since the seaboots are still on, Martin was dead as soon as he was torpedoed and thrown into the water. And thanks to his instant death, according to Davidson who says, "don't worry about him" (p.208), he did not suffer at all. Therefore, all the efforts to survive suddenly become somewhat absurd.

To a great extent, the novel resembles a play, the rock is a stage and, of course, Martin is an actor: "He stood up, facing a whole amphitheatre of water and sang a scale" (p.79). Golding, who used to be an actor as well, is aware of the influence of drama in his novels: "If they owe anything to previous work, and obviously they must, it's the theatre much more than novel writing. It's great drama in particular. I think of the shape of a novel, when I do think of a novel as having a shape, as having a shape precisely like Greek drama."¹⁸ This section of the chapter will concentrate on the dramatic side of the story, both in the sense of the shift in viewpoint and of the wider theatrical overtones of Martin's experience. Since the book is largely known for its "dramatic" change of points of view, one major concern is the question of reality. As has been pointed out by Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, "there are as many 'realities' as there are kinds of imaginative vision that can persuade."¹⁹ Generally speaking, in a theatrical situation, since all things are drama, no particular scene can be said to be more or less real than the rest, whether a flash-back or a dream. Yet, certain scenes do seem to linger in one's mind longer than the others and make one wonder if there is relative reality in them. It is this relative reality that is examined in the following pages for the purpose of appreciating the "drama" in Golding. The sudden change into a more familiar point of view in the end of a novel, hence reaching a somewhat more comfortable solution of the story, is very Goldingesque. Having been suddenly relieved of the emotional strain of reading of Martin's suffering, one realizes that one is merely an audience watching a play that has a dramatic and, to a certain extent, happy ending. Following the "final twist," so to speak, the curtain comes down and the audience goes home in this "finally twisted" state of mind, believing in the happy reality that Martin did not suffer at all. Even if the previous thirteen

¹⁸Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," p.165.

¹⁹*Critical Study*, p.121. Their other comments on *Pincher Martin* include the theatrical and cinematic references.

chapters still linger pathetically in the mind, one is persuaded by Officer Davidson into thinking of them as unreal. The only thing "real" in the book, apart from perhaps the first page, is the last chapter in which the reader undergoes an experience from Martin's "outside," to use one of Golding's words.

With this experience one feels a strong sense of irony: Martin's suffering is all in his head and his pseudo-heroic struggle only to preserve a non-existent life. This finally realized fact makes his plight on the rock seem ridiculous: all the efforts at survival, sanity, rescue. The very same fact also tends to take away the reader's sympathy which has so far largely been with Martin. In retrospect, the reader is able to see the ironic intention of the author in his description of Martin's experience, thoughts and the gradual disintegration of his mind as shown in his seeing and his consequent fear of all the bizarre signs of unreality around him. The unreality is made doubly noticeable with the dramatic lay-out of the book. On the rock, Martin is, consciously and subconsciously, acting God in "Genesis," creating his own universe. Like God, he creates first of all dry land out of water so that he has a place to live on. Martin makes the universe uniquely his own by letting the waters teem with the "red lobster" and letting "lizards" fly above. Then, in a symbolic sense, he creates "man": "I must make a man to stand here for me" (p.61). Finally, he creates "God": "On the sixth day he created God. Therefore I permit you to use nothing but my own vocabulary. In his own image created he Him" (p.196). With almost Godlike foresight---"I said I should be ill and I am" (p.160)---and omnipotence, Martin sometimes does seem as if he is in full command:

'Rain!'

Of course.

'I said there would be rain!'

Let there be rain and there was rain. (pp.170-71)

What he is able to predict from the very beginning is his madness. In fact, throughout the book, efforts are made to prevent it and, if it comes, to detect it. Sure enough, it comes, but not without some obvious merits. With the convenient assistance of his madness, Martin is able to sustain his dramatic imagery amidst the thunder storm in Chapter 12: "There was still a part that could be played---there was the Bedlamite, Poor Tom, protected from knowledge of the sign of the black lightning" (pp.177-78). As a "part" to be "played," Martin's madness, unlike Lear's, is self-predicted and deliberately chosen: "There is always madness, a refuge

like a crevice in the rock. A man who has no more defence can always creep into madness like one of those armoured things that scuttle among weed down where the mussels are" (p.186). Running parallel to the major dramatic motif of the book, the action of *King Lear* starts long before the above-mentioned scene in Chapter 12, if one compares what Martin eats, drinks, and lives on, as cited in the last section, with the following description by Edgar:

Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt, and the water: that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets; swallows the old rat, and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool, who is whipped from tything to tything, and stocked, punished, and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride, and weapon to wear,---

*But mice and rats, and such small deer,
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.*²⁰

As in many classical dramatic performances, *Pincher Martin* has more than one level of action---there are plays within the play. Apart from the rock which is the stage where most action takes place, there is another stage inside Martin's mind, or, "inside the globe of his head" (p.76) behind the "curtain of hair and flesh" (p.161). It is on this inner stage that the audience gets to see dramatic events such as the "bedroom-farce" (p.89), the morality play in which Martin doubles as "a shepherd and one of the seven deadly sins" (p.118), and, in a highly amusing way, *Hamlet* when Pete pushes aside George and Martin: "Unhand me, Gentlemen. By heaven I'll make a fish of him who lets me" (p.134); and "I love you, Chris. Father and mother is one flesh. And so my uncle. My prophetic uncle" (p.135). This scene has been explained, by Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, as one of the "elaborate images which serve as choric commentary," another theatrical device common in Greek drama, "at strategic moments" in the novel.²¹

Well-educated and handsome, Martin is recognized as "the best bloody juvenile" in the theatre (p.135) and he knows it. As he mentally reviews his stage photos, he comments on some of the best "faces" he has assumed, which reveals his extensive acting experience:

'The best photograph was the one of me as Algernon. The one as

²⁰*King Lear*, V, iv.

²¹*Critical Study*, p.127.

Demetrius wasn't bad, either---and as Freddy with a pipe. The make-up took and my eyes looked really wide apart. There was the *Night Must Fall* one. And that one from *The Way of the World*.' (p.133)

The handsome stills, or the many faces of this "juvenile," can also be viewed as another kind of theatrical "masks" Martin has worn. Like the boys in *Lord of the Flies*, behind the masks, Martin hides, "liberated from shame and self-consciousness."²² This and all the other images and phrases drawn from drama scattered throughout the book are presented by Golding with a touch of irony. Yet, the real irony is still to come when Martin acts the suffering Prometheus, crawling to orchestric music which, though not quite "rocklike" (p.189), is no less "heroic":

'I am Atlas. I am Prometheus.'

He felt himself loom, gigantic on the rock. His jaws clenched, his chin sank. He became a hero for whom the impossible was an achievement. He knelt and crawled remorselessly down the rock. He found the lifebelt in the crevice, took his knife, and sawed the metal tit away from the tube. He crawled on down towards the Red Lion and now there was background music, snatches of Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Holst. It was not really necessary to crawl but the background music underlined the heroism of a slow, undefeated advance against odds. (p.164)

Not only is the crawl unnecessary, but the entire complication of the imagined "orchestra" with all the "strings," the "woodwind," the "brass," and finally the "cadenza," turns out merely to be accompanying Martin's effort to overcome his constipation---"Haven't had a crap for a week!" (p.88)---and relieve himself of the food poison:

And the cadenza was coming---did come. It performed with explosive and triumphant completeness of technique into the sea. It was like the bursting of a dam, the smashing of all hindrance. Spasm after spasm with massive chords and sparkling arpeggios, the cadenza took of his strength till he lay straining and empty on the rock and the orchestra had gone. (p.165)

On a second reading, one sees the irony in Martin's behaviour in many places in the book, which comes eventually from the fact that he is dead. However, this irony does not occur without a trace of pity. The protagonist is dead, and death itself, no matter what happens afterwards, is more than sufficient punishment for any human being. This point may be illustrated also in the story by Bierce, "An

²² *Lord of the Flies*, p.69.

Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,"²³ after which Golding probably modelled his *Pincher Martin*. However "bad" the soldier might have been, fighting on the "wrong" side of the American Civil War to start with, the fact that he is hanged, a form of death similar to drowning but comparatively painless, would immediately have wiped out all his "debts" and most certainly have aroused deep sympathy in a reader on either side of the war. Martin "gives up" his life and it is even for the "right" side. Apart from the technicality concerning the actual occurrence of death, which will be looked at later, Golding does seem to share with Bierce a certain attitude towards his hero: a mixture of irony and sympathy.

If the feeling is mixed, then maybe the final twist in point of view should not trigger off a complete reinterpretation of the whole story. As often happens in Golding's novels, the dramatic change leaves a loose end, open to the reader's own imagination and interpretation. What is to be decided in *Pincher Martin* is the extent of "reality." With two contradictory perceptions, the reader is faced with the question: which is the more real? Is one to believe what Officer Davidson tells Mr. Campbell in the last sentence of the book simply because it is the last sentence? Or is one to stick to the larger part of the novel, the first thirteen chapters? As Hynes comments, "Some readers have felt cheated by this last-sentence reversal of their assumptions about the nature of reality in the novel."²⁴ In an author who shifts the viewpoint in almost all his books, their feeling is no doubt understandable.

Perhaps, a review of Golding's two preceding books may help to clarify the issue. Both of these books have similar "gimmick" endings. In *Lord of the Flies*, one is to choose between the two worlds, that of children and that of adults. The children's is the future world, reached in a mysterious passenger tube in an international catastrophe; and the adults' is the present world, seen with a cruiser typical of the last war. In view of the fact that the children's experience on the island is totally imaginary and hypothetical²⁵ whereas that of the adults is a vivid reproduction of modern life, should one say that the adults' miraculous appearance to rescue Ralph is in any sense more real than the children's nightmare? With *The*

²³Ambrose Bierce, *In the Midst of Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), pp.22-39.

²⁴Hynes, p.26

²⁵It is recorded in Nelson's *Source Book* that a group of American boys imitated this experience and were disappointed with completely different results.

Inheritors, the question lies between the perception of the Neanderthals and that of *Homo sapiens*. As a reader, of course, one could first hide in the trees and share the audience with Lok and Fa in watching the new people, and later join the canoe in Tuami's company and view the red creatures as "devils." But some time after the reading, one is likely to face this challenging question: which perception is closer to historic truth? In all these novels, there is a sharp contrast between a horrible situation and a reasonably "happy" ending, and the audience is given the option of taking one of the realities more seriously. Golding's own comments on the question of reality in an interview may be illuminating: "Well, as far as imagination goes, it is perfectly true to say that I've sometimes in my life found that the imaginative world had pushed the real world (if we are accepting the real world as what we share), right out of the way; was literally, more real."²⁶

Maybe, at the end of these novels, the author had those occasions when "the imaginative world" was "more real" than "the real world." Throughout human history, the audience has almost unexceptionally taken seriously the words and, through words, the "reality" of adults (more mature than children), of winners (fitter to survive than losers) and of the living (more articulate than the dead). Golding, as a champion for the "under-dog," could be seen to a large extent as trying to reverse not only the point of view of the novels, but more significantly, the point of view of human history. In this light, one could just as well say that Golding's seriousness and sense of reality lie with the first, larger, part of the books. Only at the end, is Golding suddenly becoming tongue-in-cheek. By the final shift in point of view, he is implicitly commenting on the rationality, the smugness, the blind optimism of the contemporary and conventional world. As virtually the only character in the novel and with a "fevered imagination," Pincher Martin, who constantly reminds himself "I must keep grip on reality" (p.82), though the effort is less than successful, carries the weight and pushes "the real world right out of the way."

In this section about the dramatic motif in the novel, it is assumed that the reader stays only within the boundary of this-worldly experience. Therefore, the book is taken at this level to be about Martin's death rather than his experience after death. As in "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" where the whole story describes what goes on in the protagonist's mind after he loses his footing and before his neck reaches the stretch of the hanging rope, the major action of *Pincher*

²⁶William Golding in *Conversation with Stephen Medcalf*, p.6.

Martin takes place in a split second when he is dying. Martin begins to die on the second page and is eventually dead just before the dramatic change in the last chapter. Things happening in the middle may be described as Martin's "near-death experience." In this connection, one could refer to numerous sources regarding this mysterious process. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is one elaborate example about different stages a person goes through when dying, many of which seem to correspond to what Martin sees and does. Some recent observations of people who have had close encounters with death are summarized and published by Raymond Moody.²⁷ Many typical phenomena recorded in the book do throw some interesting light on Golding's story.

Among these, the sense of bodily separation is most obvious. Often, Golding describes Martin in terms of the outward "frame" and the inward "centre."²⁸ The latter, perhaps representing his soul, moves up and down inside the hollow frame and observes the world through the eyes ("windows") and other openings of the body. What is more, the centre is seen as peeping out into the world not only behind the disfigured face, something like a "mask" in a morality play in which Martin has acted more than once, but also behind the heavy eye-lid described as the "curtain" of a window, a picture, or a stage, again dramatic equipment with which Martin is apparently familiar.

Although the centre is separated from the body, it tries to cling to it as much as it can. However, when Martin loses control through illness and, finally, madness, the centre departs from the body. The whole of Martin's struggle is to stay alive, to keep his body and soul together. Because of this frequent separation, Martin could examine his own teeth, tongue, moustache, without looking into a mirror, which is of no help anyway. After Martin binds a sheet of foil to the stone head: "He went close to the dwarf and looked down at the head to see if he could find his face reflected there. The sunlight bounced up in his eyes. He jerked upright" (p.107). Here Golding is partly playing a game with senses of reality and partly being careful to avoid the kind of mistake he made regarding Piggy's myopic lenses lighting fire from the sun light in *Lord of the Flies*. His scrutiny covers the possible contradiction with the folkloric belief represented in Stoker's *Dracula* that the undead cannot be seen in a mirror. Martin's effort to see his reflection in

²⁷Raymond A. Moody, *Life after Life* (New York: Bantam, 1975.)

²⁸The "centre," though, is also used in Golding's other writings to mean the intellect of an individual.

water is no more successful. In this sense, the story can be read not only as a science fiction, as mentioned in the first chapter, but also as a scientific nightmare. With his mouth sticking out, with the importance he attaches to his teeth, and, above all, with his life-long story of "eating" people, especially young women, Martin, who rises from his corpse, could almost pass as a "moral vampire"---sucking the life he himself lacks, from others.

Other near-death phenomena observed by Moody and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* can also be found in *Pincher Martin*, such as the dark tunnel, the wall, and the life review, giving the reader clues to the fact that Martin is experiencing death. These phenomena also serve to provide a hazy background for the dramatic, sometimes even cinematographic, enactment and reenactment of Martin's personality. All that one learns about the protagonist's past is revealed through his fragmentary "snapshots," "film trailers," and stream-of-consciousness life reviews.

(III)

So far, *Pincher Martin* has only been examined on a secular ground. Another and the most popular approach to the book, which is claimed by many to be the only possible reading,²⁹ is about Man's cosmic fall. The term "cosmic" is used in this section as an antonym of "earthly" (which designates the emphasis in the previous sections) to refer to several related concepts: "religious," "supernatural," "allegorical," and "symbolic." In the realm of the supernatural, Martin's experience on the rock definitely has to be taken as occurring after his death when he supposedly faces Purgatory.³⁰ Golding himself admits on more than one occasion that he deliberately made Martin utterly sinful. The episodes and fragments that appear as Martin reviews his life show an extremely depraved man. In assessing some of his behaviour in terms of the seven deadly sins, one could almost work out a perfect list of correspondences. Actually, such a list can be found in the novel itself.

²⁹For example Bowen as cited in the first chapter.

³⁰Frank Kermode, "The Novels of William Golding," in *Source Book*, ed. Nelson, p.116.

Ironically, as an actor, Martin is required to play one of the seven deadly sins in a morality play. In Chapter 8, there is an interesting and important conversation with Peter the producer and George the director discussing with Martin which role suits him best. The three of them are standing in front of a row of different masks and go through each of the seven in turn:

'There they are, Chris, all in a row. What about it?'

'Anything you say, old man.'

'What about Pride, George? He could play that without a mask and just stylized make-up, couldn't he?'

'Look, Pete, if I'm doubling I'd sooner not make---'

'Malice, George?'

'Envy, Pete?'

'I don't mind playing Sloth, Pete.'

'Not Sloth. Shall we ask Helen, Chris? I value my wife's advice.'

'Steady, Pete.'

'What about a spot of Lechery?'

'Pete! Stop it.'

'Don't mind me, Chris, old man. I'm just a bit wrought-up that's all. Now here's a fine piece of work, ladies and gentlemen, guaranteed unworn. Any offers? Going to the smooth looking gentleman with the wavy hair and profile. Going! Going---'

'What's it supposed to be, old man?'

'Darling, it's simply you! Don't you think, George?'

'Definitely, old man, definitely.'

'Chris-Greed. Greed-Chris. Know each other.'

'Anything to please you, Pete.'

'Let me make you two better acquainted. This painted bastard here takes anything he can lay his hands on. Not food, Chris, that's far too simple. He takes the best part, the best seat, the most money, the best notice, the best woman. He was born with his mouth and his flies open and both hands out to grab. He's a cosmic case of the bugger who gets his penny and someone else's bun. Isn't that right, George?' (pp.119-120)

The two sins high-lighted and elaborated in the conversation are "Pride" and "Greed," which fit in with almost all of Martin's behaviour as shown in the book. Golding takes great pain to show the fact that Martin commits most of the seven deadly sins, with Greed being his specialty. In the purely biblical sense, Martin also breaches every single one of the Ten Commandments, ("let the ten commandments look after themselves," p.134), particularly in despising God and hating his neighbours. Because of this extreme egotism, he is condemned after death.

According to some Christian mystics,³¹ after a man's death, he enters the world of spirits. There, if he is basically evil, he is gradually stripped of all his guises and seen in his true self. Reflected in a divine mirror, his features turn more and more ugly, more and more like his personality. In *Pincher Martin*, this reflection can be seen as resembling possibly the mask of Greed Martin used to wear in the above-mentioned morality play. "My mouth sticks out such a long way and I have two noses" (p.176). As George viciously hopes (p.154), the hardship also "mars" Martin's "profile":

The feet had been so thoroughly sodden that they seemed to have lost their shape. One big toe was blue and black with bruise and drying blood. There were bruises on either knee that ended in lacerations, not cuts or jabs but places the size of a sixpence where the skin and flesh had been worn off. His right hip was blue as though someone had laid a hand dipped in paint on it.

He examined his arms. The right elbow was swollen and stiff and there were bruises about. Here and there on his body were patches, not of raw flesh but blood flecks under the skin. He felt the bristles on his face tenderly. His right eye was fogged and that cheek was hot and stiff. (p.73)

Most significantly, to Martin's horror, his hands turn to lobster claws: "Then he was suddenly seized with a terrible loathing for lobsters and flung them away so that they cracked on the rock. The dull pain of the blow extended him into them again and they became his hands, lying discarded where he has tossed them" (pp.131-32). In a symbolic sense, Martin is reduced both mentally and physically to his nature of grabbing. In the end, instead of being cast into hell by God or some other external force, he creates an environment suited to himself, where everything corresponds to and reflects the spirit he is in. An analogy often used by the mystics is that of a drunkard ending up sleeping in a rubbish bin.

That is in effect what happens to Martin. His environment is one of slimy

³¹Such as Emanuel Swedenborg.

limpets, decayed water, freezing nights and fiery fever. He grows increasingly out of his handsomeness into a characterization of his greedy personality, with one and a half eyes, bruises all over his body and a serpent in his belly. Finally, under the black lightning, Martin is driven, by himself and his hallucination, into complete madness and reduced to merely a pair of claws. In *Pincher Martin*, Golding depicts Purgatory and, possibly, Hell as nothing more than Martin's own creation, in line with some popular Christian belief. On the rock, the protagonist is not tortured by God or any other supernatural forces, but by his own sin.

Following the principle of the maggots throughout his life, Martin perceives the entire world as a situation of either eat or be eaten. The recurrent imagery in the book includes, besides maggots, the Chinese box with a smaller one inside another; lobsters with a pair of claws crushing another pair; and above all, the image of the teeth. Martin gradually realizes that the rock his life depends on is only made of one of his teeth and the surrounding rocks are also teeth. Such a realization is possible in a novel only when it is understood as a fantasy. Golding's masterful descriptions mingling the aching tooth with the decaying rock are illustrated by the following passage:

His tongue felt along the barrier of his teeth---round to the side where the big ones were and the gap. He brought his hands together and held his breath. He stared at the sea and saw nothing. His tongue was remembering. It pried into the gap between the teeth and re-created the old, aching shape. It touched the rough edge of the cliff, traced the slope down, trench after aching trench, down towards the smooth surface where the Red Lion was, just above the gum---understood what was so hauntingly familiar and painful about an isolated and decaying rock in the middle of the sea. (p.174)

Martin is frightened by this awareness of not only the precarious nature of his survival, but also the fact that he is placed on a row of teeth-like rocks and ready to be crushed.

Whether as an embodiment of justice for the final judgement or merely another figment of Martin's hallucination, God does appear in the form of a seaman (the Big Fisherman in seaboots) towards the end of Martin's struggle. With this miraculous appearance, Martin's struggle is thrown under a new light---he needs an antagonist to make his point. In Chapter 13, God replaces the old woman and asks Martin, "Have you had enough, Christopher?" Following this question, there is a magnificent conversation between Martin and God:

'Enough of what?'

'Surviving. Hanging on.'

...

'I hadn't considered.'

'Consider now.'

'What's the good? I'm mad.'

'Even that crevice will crumble.' ...

'On the sixth day he created God. Therefore I permit you to use nothing but my own vocabulary. In his own image created he Him.'

'Consider now.' ...

'I won't. I can't.'

'What do you believe in?' ...

'The thread of my life.' (pp.195-196)

The reader is now forced to make yet another choice and a much tougher one at that, compared with the ones between Man and Nature and between different realities. One could either side with God and condemn Martin for his sins, or side with Martin and stand up to God. With the torture, the black lightning, the false hope of survival, madness, and, above all, death, Golding probably meant the punishment to exceed Martin's crimes, the implication being that the world is not a place of justice. In fact, if one reviews all of Golding's novels, one realizes that very few of Golding's characters go unpunished, even the Christ-figures such as Simon, Nathaniel, and Matty. The latter spends his life repenting and apologizing virtually just for being alive and is finally burned to death. Christianity is often seen to be built upon an image of martyrdom that demands continual suffering and sacrifice. What is more, God, apart from being the Big Fisherman, is really ubiquitous, embodied also in the image of "the Chinese" and the grave-digger from *Hamlet*: "'N when there's only one maggot left the Chinese dig it up--- ... They got X-ray eyes. Have you ever heard a spade knocking on the side of a tin box, Chris? Boom! Boom! Just like thunder" (p.136). Martin, as the temporarily biggest and relatively successful maggot, is finally dug up and "eaten" by God, who could possibly be viewed as a bigger maggot.

Golding is generally categorized as being a "Calvinist," especially in his belief in the intrinsic evil nature of human beings. Along this line, could Calvin's theory of predestination also have some influence in Golding's work such as *Pincher Martin*? If it were true, then Martin is not in the process of falling, but has already fallen. Death itself is a sign of man being cosmically fallen starting with the myth of the Garden of Eden and there is a possibility that Martin is faced with two such deaths. Since it has been made clear in the original Calvinist doctrine that God's selection is beyond any human comprehension and should never even be questioned, the actual process of predestination is kept largely obscure.³² However, Martin stands up and points out its contradiction:

'You gave me the power to choose and all my life you led me carefully to this suffering because my choice was my own. Oh yes! I understand the pattern. All my life, whatever I had done I should have found myself in the end on that same bridge, at that same time, giving that same order---the right order, the wrong order. Yet, suppose I climbed away from the cellar over the bodies of used and defeated people, broke them to make steps on the road away from you, why should you torture me? If I ate them, who gave me mouth?' (p.197)

Whether or not the argument for predestination is sound is an academic point, but if Martin's fate has been decided beforehand and no matter what he does, no difference is going to be made, then it is not Martin's crimes, or even sins, that brought about the torturous punishment. The cause lies in the fact that Martin is not fortunate enough to be one of the elect.

The "Calvinist" interpretation falls down in Martin's case because the culprit is made an offer of salvation even as late as in Chapter 13. As mentioned above, God asks Martin if he has had enough just before the reader sees him for the last time. What actually happens to Martin after this is again left to the reader's imagination. If Martin had repented and turned to God, it would be an entirely different story. Maybe God does this because Martin has never been offered a choice before in his life, which means that he committed all the sins in total ignorance, at least more so than, say, Sammy Mountjoy whose Fall is chosen out of his free will. In Martin, it seems a blind stubbornness when he refuses to let go something which the reader knows to be merely his own mental fabrication.

God is offering mercy and grace in His peculiar way in order to save Martin, just as He did with Martin's literary predecessor of two hundred years ago. As a

³²Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980).

self-assured adventurer, Robinson Crusoe is no more God-fearing and God-worshipping than Martin. Yet he sees himself treated somewhat differently by the same God:

It is impossible to express the Astonishment and Confusion of my Thoughts on this Occasion; I had hitherto acted upon no religious Foundation at all, indeed I had very few Notions of Religion in my Head, or had entertain'd any Sense of any Thing that had befallen me, otherwise than as a Chance, or, as we lightly say, what pleases God; without so much as enquiring into the End of Providence in these Things, or his Order in governing Events in the World: But after I saw Barley grow there, in a Climate which I know was not proper for Corn, and especially that I knew not how it came there, it startl'd me strangely, and I began to suggest, that God had miraculously caus'd this Grain to grow without any Help of Seed sown, and that it was so directed purely for my Sustenance, on that wild miserable Place.³³

This is only one example of Crusoe's belief in his favourable treatment from divine providence, which certainly serves its function and helps draw Crusoe closer to God. However, the self-serving convenience of God's assistance to castaways has been less than obvious in the twentieth century retelling of the Crusoe story.

But even so, Martin should indeed consider himself fortunate when he still faces a chance to be saved, because that means a life-time of his wrong-doings don't matter. As Golding himself commented, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do. But then that isn't quite what God seems to say to Pincher Martin in the book."³⁴ The negative determinism might argue that salvation is impossible in Martin's case. In other words, Martin's self-centred choice is predetermined by his evil nature, by the fact that he was not one of the elect and by all the evils that he has done throughout his life. As Golding puts it in a BBC Third Programme, "Just to be Pincher is purgatory; to be Pincher for eternity is hell."³⁵ According to the way Chapter 13 ends, there is at least a possibility that Martin clings on for ever.

Does one know how evil Robinson Crusoe is? The fact that he does not reflect on anything evil he has done makes one wonder if it were possible for him to be one hundred per cent good, or whether he is any better than Martin. At least from his reflections quoted above, it is known that he has been no better as far as

³³ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p.78.

³⁴ William Golding in *Conversation with Stephen Medcalf*, 1977, p.15.

³⁵ Frank Kermode, "The Novels of William Golding," in *Source Book*, ed. Nelson, p.116.

religion is concerned. He may have been just as bad in the moral sense. It seems that Crusoe's philosophy of life is none other than the survival of the fittest, which is translated in Martin's "vocabulary" as the philosophy of the Chinese box and the preparation of the Chinese dish, that of eating or being eaten.

As a preparation for Paradise, Purgatory should be a stage where all one's evil is purged. No wonder only the ugly and despicable side of Martin is revealed. Crusoe was on another level of existence and that is why his story is more readily comprehensible in human terms. On the fabulous level where Martin's survival takes place, everything is covered with darkness and a "cloud of unknowing." Through the black lightning, heaven can only be understood as a sheer negation of everything human. Golding himself admits that part of what goes on between Martin and God is incomprehensible:

In an interchange between God and a single character, anybody who is overhearing it will not understand at least one half of the dialogue. He may understand half of it, but there is fifty per cent that he won't understand; so fifty per cent of that dialogue is literally impenetrable. It is to Pincher: Pincher and God are dealing in the same terms. Pincher is saying to God, I am that I am, and God is saying, I am that I am. And between the two of them, you get a dialogue which is not communicable to a third person, unless they happen to be Pincher.³⁶

Since no easy conclusion can be drawn from the inaccessible dialogue between Martin and God, the mystery may be solved with an analysis of another dialogue in the book. It is the dialogue between Martin and Nathaniel, who may be considered as a Christ-figure or a representative of God. If the reader manages to assemble the fragments of the conversation scattered all around the book, with the major part found in sections from pages 69 to 72 and from 182 to 183, one gets an almost complete picture which anticipates Martin's fate. "'---You could say that I know it is important for you personally to understand about heaven---about dying---because in only a few years---'" ... "'---because in only a few years you will be dead'" (pp.71-72). At the time of the conversation, Nathaniel is about to give a lecture on "the technique of dying into heaven" (p.71). His definition of heaven is: "'Take us as we are now and heaven would be sheer negation. Without form and void. You see? A sort of black lightning, destroying everything that we call life'" (p.70). To this, Martin replies: "'I don't see and I don't much care but I'll come to your lecture'" (p.70). Because Nathaniel, who appears to have an accurate vision of the

³⁶William Golding in *Conversation with Stephen Medcalf*, pp.15-16.

future, says to Martin: "You have an extraordinary capacity to endure" (p.71), "To achieve heaven" (p.71). Because there is at least a possibility that Martin does go to the lecture as he has promised and hence has heard what Nathaniel has to say about the "technique" which is specifically "important" for him; Most of all, because, although he is "not interested in heaven" (p.70), Martin still faces the opportunity of dying into heaven at this rather late stage of his life---'only a few years' before his death. In fact, up till then, most of his sins have already been committed, and, despite his continuing jealousy of Nathaniel, Martin's life in the Royal Navy, where he proves himself to be a competent and worthy officer as shown in Section (I) of this chapter, is seen as comparatively blameless. Because of all these, Martin's end appears indeed not as gloomy as many would have thought.

If achieving heaven is, instead of a moral or religious fulfillment, only a "technique," and the "capacity to endure" is so important in the process, Martin's chance of ending up there could be bigger than Nathaniel, the Christ-figure. Facing the "technical" and "capable" Martin,³⁷ shall one say, are the following possibilities. If he succeeds in defying God, he will stay on in his "own heaven" (p.196)---"The sort of heaven we invented for ourselves after death, if we aren't ready for the real one" (p.183). If he is defeated by God, he will ascend to the real heaven, which is a "sheer negation" to his own. There may be a third possibility which can be summed up in Augustine's words: "To him that does all that in him lies, God does not refuse his grace."³⁸

(IV)

Ever since its publication, *Pincher Martin* has been treated by many critics as a parody of *Robinson Crusoe*, which has survived the last two hundred years largely owing to the heroic qualities of its protagonist. Crusoe is recognized as a hero, not because of his morality, but because of his capacities, one of which, the "capacity to endure," is shared by Martin. Therefore, the present section will attempt to present the heroic side of Martin, largely through a comparison with the generally accepted heroes in Western society, because, without an absolute criterion for a "hero,"

³⁷This aspect of him will be looked at in Section (V).

³⁸Anon., *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. James Walsh (London: SPCK, 1981), p.76.

comparison seems the only useful approach. However, the method adopted in this comparative attempt is not that of searching for Martin's "merits," even if he had any, and elevating him to the level of the "hero," but that of selecting the defects of the established classical heroes, whether life-size like Crusoe or mythical like Prometheus (Martin can be seen as both), and lowering them to the level of Martin. Then, with the recognizably shared qualities, Martin, hopefully, would be able to "rise" from his "fallen" state with some kind of buoyancy borrowed from his "fellow-heroes."

When comparing Golding with Defoe, one should be aware of the great difference between the two, especially in that Golding is, or at least claims to be, a "religious man," and Defoe never was. For Crusoe, the adventure, the work ethic, and the prosperity themselves, according^{to} Protestantism, are guarantee enough for the soul to go to Heaven. Golding lives in a different age. It is an age when Man is faced with new challenges, new contradictions and problems. It would be oversimplistic if one were to say that twentieth century writers have gone back to religious preoccupations again. The same over-simplification would be committed if Golding's works are read merely as depictions of the cosmic Fall. *Pincher Martin* is more than a book about Purgatory just as *Lord of the Flies* is more than a book about Paradise. The children suffer from diarrhea for eating the fruit in their "paradise," and Martin suffers from the same disease in his "purgatory." The symbolic meaning of this is made clear in *Pincher Martin* as "the serpent" in Martin's belly. "Why drag in good and evil when the serpent lies coiled in my own body" (p.163). To put it in *Beelzebub's* terms, it is none other than "close, close, close. I'm a part of you."

The link between these two novels is quite obvious, especially with regard to characterization. As from *The Coral Island* to *Gorilla Hunters*, *Pincher Martin* is something like a "grown-up" version of *Lord of the Flies*.³⁹ An exploration of such a link could perhaps clarify some obscure characteristics of Martin. A close look at Martin reveals a combination of Ralph, Jack and Piggy---all the three main characters in *Lord of the Flies*. In outward looks, Martin must have been like Ralph in his youth: handsome, well-built and well-adjusted. As far as personal qualities are concerned, Martin possesses almost all that Jack has---"bravery and

³⁹This continuing process is further examined in Chapter 3.

resourcefulness ... obscured by his wrath, envy, pride, hatred, and lust for blood."⁴⁰ Somewhat like Jack in the choir, the earlier part of Martin's life was spent acting, and his musical talent is quite obvious in the book. His ability to manipulate people, especially in bullying the weaker around him, makes him a natural leader. What is more, Martin is as "precocious" as Jack in his readiness for violence, if one is to consider his crushing Peter in a bicycle race:

Peter was riding behind him and they were flat out. It was his new bike under him but it was not as good as Peter's new one. If Peter got past with that new gear of his he'd be uncatchable. Peter's front wheel was overlapping his back one in a perfect position. He'd never have done that if he weren't deadly excited. The road curves here to the right, here by the pile of dressing. They are built up like rock---a great pile of stones for mending the road down to Hodson's Farm. Don't turn, go straight on, keep going for the fraction of a second longer than he expects. Let him turn, with his overlapping wheel. Oh clever, clever, clever. My leg, Chris, my leg---I daren't look at my leg. Oh Christ. (pp.152-53)

Then comes Piggy, who is identified, though with certain irony, as a "hero" by some commentators,⁴¹ to make Martin's set of "sinful" characteristics complete with Greed, which highlights the similarity in the two. Despite Piggy's physical differences: fat, weak, and miserable, the two probably have the most in common. Rationalistic and intelligent, they are both unbelievers not only with regard to God, but also anything supernatural. This very quality makes them selfish and skeptical. Martin is not myopic, but with "one and a half eye" often "fogged" (p.73), his vision becomes "blurred" (p.194), just as Piggy's glasses are seen as steamed, robbed, partly broken ("Now I only got one eye," p.78), and finally smashed.

With his "specs," Piggy is the fire-giver to the rest of the children by "concentrating" sun light, and this makes him Prometheus in symbolic terms, a hero with whom Martin also identifies: "... bolts flung at Prometheus, blinding white, white, white, searing, the aim of the sky at man on the rock---" (p.189). The image of the fire-giver runs explicitly through all the first three of Golding's novels, from the bespectacled Piggy, through *Homo sapiens*, to "Prometheus" in *Pincher Martin*. And it goes on, if only implicitly, in his later works as symbolized by, for instance, the invention of gun powder in *Envoy Extraordinary*, according to which the know-how of one of the four things China can be proud of is but imported.

⁴⁰Terence Dewsnap, *William Golding's Lord of the Flies* (New York: Monarch Press, 1964), p.37.

⁴¹See Stern's comments quoted in Chapter 1.

Martin of course is not Prometheus in the ordinary sense: he never gives fire---the only "fires" in his possession giving "not heat but pain" (p.48). However, in an almost ironical sense, Prometheus and Martin do have something in common. They are both pinchers, and they both have the courage to defy authority, a quality which human beings have admired throughout history. The act of theft on the part of Prometheus has never been a substantial hurdle to stop people taking him as their hero. Nor has the motive behind and, moreover, the consequence of the act of stealing fire and of giving it to mankind only for it to be abused as a more efficient means of killing one another. According to *The Inheritors*, fire comes to mankind accompanied by all kinds of corruption and evil. All this never prevented human beings from admiring Prometheus. The mythical Greek hero is not only admired for the practical reason of enhancing human progress, but also, perhaps even more importantly, for his courage in defying and standing up to Zeus. In fact, the two are unavoidably interrelated. To say outright that Golding meant Martin to be a hero is missing the whole point of irony in his writing. Martin, as a self-proclaimed Prometheus, is indeed pathetic. Furthermore, he is not Prometheus because he is not a friend of Man. In fact, he is completely friendless to the end of his life. Throughout the book, he never does a positive service to mankind in the way that Prometheus did. Anything Martin has done is, above all, done out of his self-centred Greed.

Having said all that, one could perhaps turn around and examine the hero with whom Martin tries hard to identify. Western literature has not always overlooked the motive beyond Prometheus' gift of fire to mankind. Among the very first writers about Prometheus, Hesiod made it quite clear that the hero was "seeking to rival Zeus in counsel." Hesiod was also one of the first to point out what we mentioned above: "Prometheus' theft of fire brought with it the working of metals, and metals meant weapons, and weapons meant violence and Greed."⁴² Prometheus himself, according to Aeschylus, is fully aware of the harm he has done to man:

... Let me rather

Relate to you the tragedy of man:

How from the silly creature that he was

⁴²Quoted from *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

I made him conscious and intelligent.⁴³

Martin is also aware of this "tragedy of man":

I will tell you what a man is. He goes on four legs till Necessity bends the front end upright and makes a hybrid of him. The finger-prints of those hands are about his spine and just above the rump for proof if you want it. He is a freak, an ejected foetus robbed of his natural development, thrown out in the world with a naked covering of parchment, with too little room for his teeth and a soft bulging skull like a bubble. But nature stirs a pudding there and sets a thunderstorm flickering inside the hardening globe, white, lambent lightning a constant flash and tremble. (p.190)

In a different light, Prometheus could be seen as being driven by a Greed for power when he stole fire, and the theft itself is an act always associated with Greed. Then, by giving mankind fire, he provided it with all kinds of evil, among which the most long-lasting is once more Greed, not even to mention the indirectly resultant Pandora's box of misery and evil. "Hope," of course, according to the myth, is the only thing desirable left in the box, and it is therefore the only thing Martin could live on: "He began to look for hope in his mind" (p.117). From the means of theft to the end of spreading evil, Prometheus appears to be gripped with Greed in the same way as Martin. As far as Greed is concerned, Prometheus the "Pincher" is not altogether different from Martin the Pincher. In other words, Martin is not so much worse than, or even the opposite of, Prometheus. The fact that Martin is gripped with Greed shows that he is merely following the humanistic tradition of reaching beyond one's limit, a tradition very much started by Prometheus and the Greek mythology. In a modern industrialized society, Greed is often seen as being used as an economic motivator, and the over-reacher is often considered a hero. That is why some statistics show that, as a popular social reaction, the original Gregorian version of the deadly sins has been revised and "Greed" had been moved to the top of the new list.⁴⁴

In *Pincher Martin*, Golding's irony is double-edged. He aims at Martin, and hence at man-kind, from the position of God, the wise old fisherman. At the same time, he aims at God from the position of man-kind. Reflecting on *Pincher Martin*

⁴³E. A. Havelock, *The Crucifixion of Intellectual Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1951), p.143. The entire drama of *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus is translated by Havelock and incorporated in Part 2 of his book, which will be examined in some detail in the following section.

⁴⁴This particular survey will be looked at in the next chapter.

some twenty years after its publication, in a conversation with Stephen Medcalf, Golding said:

If I ever published another novel, maybe it would be there [in the novel], and that is this: there's a memorial which says,

Here Lies Martin Elgin Dodd
Have Mercy on his Soul Lord God
As I would have were I Lord God
And thou wert Martin Elgin Dodd.

D'you see, there is this kind of sensible feeling, look Lord God, after all, d'you know, I'm a human being.⁴⁵

As a Christian, Golding's double-edged irony can sometimes become really sharp: "What one has to say is that, here we are and any god that exists, if he does not accept us in our full humanity, then he is out from this moment on. We will have nothing to do with him any more. He can do what he likes, but we know what we know."⁴⁶ One could always argue that writers change. The fact that Golding did not see Martin as "an evil man at all"⁴⁷ twenty years later does not mean that Martin had been depicted as a hero when the book was written. However, a certain degree of tolerance does give one room for different interpretations.

Although Robinson Crusoe made the desert island his private property and Friday his slave, hence starting his empire building process, the reader does not see much indication of Greed. In its place, there is "striving." It is this striving that saved Crusoe. It is the same striving that created human history and pushed it forward. Readers in the last two centuries have admired Robinson Crusoe for his ceaseless striving and come to the same conclusion as Goethe: "he whose strivings never cease is ours for his redeeming."⁴⁸ Faust as an image of ceaseless strivings, which has fascinated many western poets, is an over-reaching hero. So is Prometheus, as an embodiment of human intelligence agonized in the grip of

⁴⁵William Golding in *Conversation with Stephen Medcalf*, 1977, p.14.

⁴⁶*Conversation with Medcalf*, 1977, pp.14-15.

⁴⁷*Conversation with Medcalf*, 1977, p.14.

⁴⁸*Faust*, Part Two, p.282.

necessity. This necessity, whether it means God or fate or nature, makes man different from animals. Like Piggy complaining about children acting like "a pack of painted niggers" (p.199), Martin also values intelligence: "The solution lies in intelligence. That is what distinguishes us from the helpless animals that are caught in their patterns of behaviour, both mental and physical" (pp.173-74). In contrast, although Nathaniel appears almost superhuman with his "tall and spider-thin figure" (p.70) always "perched" "absurdly high up" either on a book shelf (p.70) or on the rail of the ship (p.53), he is not an "over-reacher": "... the responsibility of deciding is too much for one man" (p.155), which makes him subhuman. Golding himself wrote a poem about this kind of people, who,

Themselves too weak to sin or kill,
 Too weak for anger or for hate
 That red blood pulses out in spate---
 Must sidle here to lick the crust
 And leaving of another's lust.⁴⁹

Nathaniel joins the Royal Navy not even because he is forced to as in the case of Martin, but because "I couldn't fly and I shouldn't be any use in the Army" (p.155). While Nathaniel may be described as "fatalistic," Martin never accepts his fate readily. With "the inexhaustible vitality" (his last-ditch battle for survival) and "the self disciplined ability to work for a far off objective"⁵⁰ (his efforts to be rescued), Martin possesses almost all the qualities in this eighteenth century hero. He is determined to fight whatever force against him: "I don't claim to be a hero. But I've got health and education and intelligence. I'll beat you" (p.77).

Crusoe, very much a Promethean hero as far as intelligence is concerned, did what Piggy tried to do and what Pincher Martin could have done, given the right time and place. They all aim at a "sensible" and "heroic" civilization. Martin, though having failed, is at once Faust and Prometheus. If one is for human progress and civilization, one could perhaps peer through the black lightning and see the heroic side of Pincher Martin and side with him. In his last battle against odds, the storm is real and the music is no longer as ironical as in Chapter 11:

⁴⁹Quoted from Cecil W. Davis, "The Novels Foreshadowed," *English*, No.99 (Autumn 1968), p.87.

⁵⁰Rubinstein on Crusoe, more fully quoted in Chapter 1.

He collapsed under the enormous pressure and went down in the water of the trench. The weight withdrew and left him struggling. He got up and the sky fell on him again. This time he was able to lurch along the trench because the weight of water was just not sufficient to break him, and the sea in the trench was no higher than his knees. The world came back, storm-grey and torn with flying streamers, and he gave it storm-music, crash of timpani, brass blared, and a dazzle of strings. He fought a hero's way from trench to trench through water and music, his clothes shaking and plucked, tattered like the end of a windsock, hands clawing. He and his mouth shouted through the uproar.

'Ajax! Prometheus!' (p.192)

From this scene, the sympathetic reader could have the impression of something heroic going on. However, if one puts the scenes in the perspective of Martin's life, as Golding depicts it, one sees that the hero is acting again as he has always done. He is acting the hero. This is the only thing Martin can do, because all his life there has never been a noble deed that he can claim as his own. He is a hero not in the real sense, but in a mock sense.

Ultimately, the point is this: by making Martin an ironic character, Golding's shotgun is actually aimed at the traditionally accepted heroes in the human community. With some critical examination, these historically idolized figures can be brought down from their thrones and reduced to the same level as Martin, a modern man. In the same way as Joyce's creation of Leopold Bloom as his modern "Odysseus," Golding is portraying his modern "Prometheus." Whether the intention of the novel is mockery, criticism, or sympathy, if Prometheus can be a Greek hero and Crusoe an imperialist hero, why cannot Martin be a modern hero? Since the concept of hero has always been a human one, never a divine one, only this-worldly criteria should be applied before the title is granted.

Martin is a hero not only because he identifies himself with Prometheus and Crusoe, but also because he is made one by some accepted social practice, whether he likes it or not. In 1916, a novel by H. Dorling who calls himself "Taffrail" was published under the title *Pincher Martin, O.D.: A Story of the Inner Life of the Royal Navy*. Ironically, apart from adopting the name of the hero in Taffrail's book, Golding's novel is, to a great extent, about the "inner life" of a Royal Navy officer. The numerous corresponding episodes suggest that William Golding had more than *Robinson Crusoe* in mind as a model for his parody.

"O.D.," as a naval slang term, stands for "ordinary seaman" in Taffrail's book,

which is exactly what Golding's Martin is before his promotion: "As an ordinary seaman, sir, one's the minutest cog in a machine. As an officer one would have more chance of hitting the old Hun for six, sir, actually" (p.94). Taffrail's hero (henceforth called Martin O.D. to avoid confusion since the other Martin is already a lieutenant when the story begins) joins the Royal Navy voluntarily and the ships are named *Belligerent* (a battleship), *Providence* (a trawler) and *Mariner* (a destroyer). It seems quite significant that Golding, while adopting the hero's name, does not use any of the names for his destroyer. He wants something really vicious, therefore, *Wildebaste* is it called. The manner in which his hero joins the same navy is different, too, reflecting a changed attitude to war in the first half of the century.

The two Martins are fighting the same enemy, Germany, and they share the same fate of being torpedoed. As a matter of fact, Martin O.D., not being as experienced as Martin, has to be reminded to remove his seaboots. He had time only to kick off one of them before he is thrown overboard. When drowning, Martin O.D. has a typical near-death experience, which echoes the scene in "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" and anticipates Martin's experience:

He seemed to have been swimming for hours, and was breathless and very weary. His limbs felt incapable of further movement, and it was with almost a feeling of relief that he gave up the struggle as hopeless. But for his swimming-collar he would have sunk then and there. How long he remained quiescent he could not tell; but during this awful time his senses never left him, and he found himself wondering how long it would take him to die. He did not dread the prospect; anything seemed better than this awful shortness of breath and the constant buffeting by the seas. The most trivial events and the most important happenings of his short life crowded into his overwrought brain. His thoughts travelled to his home, and he pictured his mother the last time he had seen her, framed in the doorway of her cottage. He almost laughed when he remembered himself tearing down the road to catch the train. He must have looked funny, excruciatingly funny, but he felt a slight pang of regret on thinking that he would never tread that road again. Next his mind reverted to Billings, and he wondered hazily what had become of him. Poor Joshua, he had been a good friend to him! He hoped he was not drowned. What was Emmeline doing at this moment? The recollection of her seemed indistinct and shadowy, somehow. He could not picture her face, merely remembered that she was pretty and fascinating. What would she say when she heard he had been drowned? Would she go into mourning and cry her pretty eyes out? Perhaps she would marry some one else. (pp. 203-204)

After an almost symbolically baptismal process of falling, sinking, dying, and then rebirth (he is first seized by the hair when a boat finds him), rising, he is, in

a way, promoted from the sunken battleship to a destroyer. In the second part of the novel, Martin O.D. goes through some glorious sea battles, is honoured with a minor wound, promoted to "Able Seaman" and finally reunited with his fiancée---a very happy ending.

The crucial contrast between the two Martins is that Martin O.D. is capable of "giving up the struggle as hopeless" whereas Martin clings on. The fall from the ship's deck is very dramatic for Martin O.D., more so than for Martin. He is seen as "sliding," "falling, falling," and "went down and down" (pp.202-203). As soon as he loses sight of a boat, he "commended his soul to his Maker." And this very act of yielding could be the reason for Martin O.D.'s rescue. In a mythical as well as literal sense, by accepting death, he is saved by *Providence*.

Martin is not as lucky as Martin O.D.. The ghastly nightmarish opening of Golding's novel does not give a clear indication of when he dies, though many commentators say that his death occurred on the very second page of the story.⁵¹

But the man lay suspended behind the whole commotion, detached from his jerking body. The luminous pictures that were shuffled before him were drenched in light but he paid no attention to them. Could he have controlled the nerves of his face, or could a face have been fashioned to fit the attitude of his consciousness where it lay suspended between life and death, that face would have worn a snarl. But the real jaw was contorted down and distant, the mouth was slopped full. The green tracer that flew from the centre began to spin into a disc. The throat at such a distance from the snarling man vomited water and drew it in again. The hard lumps of water no longer hurt. There was a kind of truce, observation of the body. There was no face but there was a snarl. (p.8)

When one comes to analyse Martin's state of mind, the matter is more complicated than one usually assumes. Since his destroyer is torpedoed even before the novel begins and Martin is assumed dead on the second page of the book, the whole question about the willingness to die is irrelevant. The fact that Martin is blown sky-high makes him a hero. In Taffrail's book there is a remark by one of the seamen on exactly this fact: "... just think what a glorious death it would be for you if you did go sky-high! Why, your name would be in the Roll of Honour, and our photo in the *Daily Mirror*. You'd be a public hero!" To this remark, another seaman responds: "Better be a live convict than a dead hero!" (p.224). Martin is dead. Therefore, he is a hero, whether he chooses it or not. His name

⁵¹For example, Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, *Critical Study*, p.131.

would be in the Roll of Honour and his photo, most probably with "wavy hair," would be in the *Daily Mirror*.

As illustrated in Section (II), Martin is an actor, and his acting habit is like his beard: "'Strange that bristles go on growing even when the rest of you is--'" (p.125). Golding seems to like this analogy and makes the same one with his writing: "You can stop breathing, but just the way your beard goes on growing in your coffin, I'm quite sure your right arm goes on twitching, you know, and the ghost of a pen indicts ghostly novels down, in that ghostly land."⁵² In his ghostly world, Martin acts out not only different parts in theatrical productions, but also, on a larger scale, the heroic part of the entire human race on the stage of the world. In an allegorical sense, he is "everyman" alone on a rock. That is probably why all the superficially comical scenes do not appear exactly comical to the reader. *Pincher Martin* is anything but a comedy. As Peter Green comments: "Mr. Golding makes it quite clear that Pincher Martin's struggle for survival is not intended to be seen as heroic, but rather as egotistical ... He refuses to acknowledge the cosmic chaos of death. Yet, paradoxically enough, it is just at this point that Pincher---like Milton's Satan---breaks away from his creator's original intention."⁵³

(V)

If the hero is dead at the beginning of the story, the struggle that follows is not one between life and death, but between the first and second deaths (*The Two Deaths of Christopher Martin*). "'I must be careful when I look round at the wind. I don't want to die again'" (p.176). Martin is at a disadvantage by comparison with both Martin O.D. and Robinson Crusoe in the sense that no matter how hard he tries, he is not going to regain his life. Against the background of the rise in prosperity of both his predecessors, if one may use the phrase to refer to Crusoe and Martin O.D., Martin's fall can be seen more clearly and as being inevitable.

⁵²William Golding in *Conversation with Stephen Medcalf*, p.20.

⁵³"The World of William Golding," in *Source Book*, ed. Nelson, p.183.

Time and conditions are drastically different. And this may be viewed as another thing that Martin can do nothing about. The same kind of Greed embodied in the character of Crusoe, which has been admired as empire-building in the last two hundred years or so, in that of Martin becomes theft, robbery, rape, and murder, finally reducing the protagonist to a pair of claws clutching each other. Even between two Martins, only less than half a century apart, the contrast is sharp enough. The former's gallantry becomes the latter's defect; the former's adventure becomes the latter's misery; the former's fortune becomes the latter's misfortune; the former's prosperity becomes the latter's wretchedness---in short, the hero in *Martin O.D.* becomes the antihero in *Martin*.

How does all this misfortune come to Martin? The first part of the hero's life appears to be relatively free of unhappiness. Young and intelligent and handsome, Martin invariably manages to get his way. Then, there is a sudden turn of events, as typical in most of classical tragedies, which is told in the short section between Pages 149 and 157 in Chapter 10. The change starts with Martin's failure to seduce Mary Lovell (a combination of Saint Mary and "Love Well" or "Love All"), most probably something which has never happened to him before. Then his sudden dismissal from the theatre, a situation in which Martin could be seen as "more sinn'd against, than sinning,"⁵⁴ leaves him with no excuse to evade the draft:

'No, old man. I'm sorry, but you're not essential.'

'But George---we've worked together! You know me---'

'I do, old man. Definitely.'

'I should be wasted in the Forces. You've seen my work.'

'I have, old man.'

'Well then---'

The look up under the eyebrows. The suppressed smile. The smile allowed to spread until the white teeth were reflected in the top of the desk.

'I've been waiting for something like this. That's why I didn't kick you out before. I hope they mar your profile, old man. The good one.'
(pp.153-54)

⁵⁴*King Lear*, III, ii.

Desperate, he turns to Helen, the producer's wife and his one-time mistress, for help, only to be rejected out of jealousy: "'Why don't you ask Margot, my sweet, or that little thing you took out driving?'" (p.154). This series of disastrous incidents is followed by Nathaniel's announcement that he and Mary are getting married. The jealousy Martin feels at this news is, if anything, quite "justifiable." The beautiful girl has been introduced to Nathaniel by none other than Martin himself, perhaps feeling secure in the knowledge that Nathaniel is such an unattractive and boring man. It would naturally be humiliating to Martin, who has always been a lady's man, to hear that the girl, who has rejected his determined advances even with a promise of marriage thrown in, is to have "her surname now abandoned to" Nathaniel (p.149), who is in every sense Martin's inferior. "He felt the bleak recognition rising in him of the ineffable strength of these circumstances and this decision. Not where he eats but where he is eaten. Blood rose with the recognition, burning in the face, power to break" (p.157). The indignation is not purely passionate---he does not love Mary---nor is it even purely sexual. It is much more directed towards the fact that he is no longer the biggest maggot---"Not where he eats but where he is eaten."

When asked about any previous work to which his novels may be indebted, Golding acknowledges only Greek tragedy: "You have this rise of tension and then the sudden fall and all the rest of it. You may even find the technical Greek terms tucked away in the book, if you like, and check them off one by one. So the Greek tragedy as a form, a classical form, is very much there. The idea of the character who suffers a disastrous fall through a flaw in his character, that you find there, I think. So it does really stem as much from Greek tragedy as much as anything else."⁵⁵ Whereas numerous references could be made to tragedies, many of which are explicitly named in the novel itself and have been discussed in Section (II), the scope of the present section only allows one focus. And since the author specifically mentions as his origin the Greek tragedy, one could temporarily follow Golding's suggestion and concentrate on one such example in the *genre*, the selection of which conveniently leads to *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus. The attempt of such a choice for comparison is not meant to be at the expense of eliminating other and better analogies, and the particular extracts which are made from that play, not always the most representative ideas, are only for the purpose of illustrating certain

⁵⁵James R. Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," pp.165-66.

aspects of the novel under discussion.⁵⁶ Prometheus, the Greek hero, is portrayed by Aeschylus as a "man" rather than a "god." Chained alone to a rock, he cannot do anything about his state and is as "ineffectual" as Martin on his rock. The lamentation in Episode Four sums up this state:

Man alone,

Poor suffering man, meant nothing. (p.130)

...

But Penalties not these did I expect:

To see myself rotting beneath the sky,

The lonely tenant of this lifeless peak. (p.132)

Martin has the same feeling for his penalty: "I am alone; so alone! ... Because of what I did I am an outsider and alone" (p.181). As Havelock comments, "We learn not only that we are alone, that in time we are a temporary event, but also that the territory on which we have a foothold is like a boulder on a mountainside, not to be distinguished from a thousand others; capable of being kicked into insignificance. The knowledge is too much for us, and it may yet kill us" (p.6).

The tragedy of Prometheus is not only that he is a man, but also that he is an intellectual man, like the university-educated Martin. In fact, symbolically speaking, without the former's intelligence imparting knowledge to men, there would hardly be any of the latter's education. Yet, "the education of the masses, as a kind of by-product of itself, kindles the concept of the preciousness of human life" (Havelock, p.22). And, it is only natural for Martin, a receiver of this education, to remind himself:

I won't die.

I can't die.

Not me---

Precious. (p.14)

⁵⁶The text of the play chosen for study is the one incorporated as the second part of Havelock's book *The Crucifixion of Intellectual Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1951), not only because it is a superior translation but also because of the immediate contemporary relevance the author attaches to the ancient play in his analysis which makes up the first half of the book. The book is taken as a whole and all the references hence made, both to the criticism and to the play, are only indicated with a page number.

As suggested in Episode Seven of *Prometheus Bound*, almost all the subjects of human education in language and numerals, in navigation and medicine originate from Prometheus. Indeed, if Prometheus had not invented the ship:

The gleaming sail that wafts across the sea

The intrepid mariner was my device. (p.144)

Martin would never have his destroyer or even the imagined ship he rides towards the end of the story. Intelligence of course is at once "superb" and "dangerous" (Havelock, p.118), because it enables one to see that the "room made for man ... didn't exist" (p.4). Martin shares this knowledge as early as in the third chapter: "An hour on this rock is a lifetime. What have you to lose? There is nothing here but torture. Give up. Leave go" (p.45). However, as always, knowledge and action are two different things.

Another thing Martin shares with Prometheus is foresight, which is the etymological meaning of the name "Prometheus." Martin is the first one to sight the U-boat and, though in a more ironic sense, he predicts virtually everything that is to happen to him on the rock:

'Everything is predictable. I knew I shouldn't drown and I didn't. There was a rock. I knew I could live on it and I have. I have defeated the serpent in my body. I knew I should suffer and I have. But I am winning. There is a certain sense in which life begins anew now, for all the blotting paper and the pressure.' (p.166)

With the Promethean "cunning guile" (Havelock, p.130) in defiance of authority, Martin is also a "scientific sinner" (Havelock, p.172) in his disbelief of supernatural power. As far as this egotism is concerned, the Promethean myth could be brought together with the Christian myth. As Havelock rightly observes: "This tale, and the Hebrew story of the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man, doubtless have no literary connection, certainly none that can be traced. But on the assumption that both are myths of an inherited racial consciousness, one is struck by some basic similarities of motive and spirit. Both are built out of resentment and distrust, directed against man's strenuous struggle to win a living; and against the seduction of sexual passion ..." (pp.50-51). Both of these are Martin's sins, though in a slightly different sense, and put in his words they can be described as "living" and "cuckolding." The whole of Martin's story may be summed up as doing just these two things at all cost. So perhaps can the story of ^{the} human race (at any rate according to Freud). Martin, however, does not want to

be told this cliché: "Tunnels and wells and drops of water all this is old stuff. You can't tell me. I know my stuff, just sexual images from the unconscious, the libido, or is it id? All explained and known. Just sexual stuff what can you expect? Sensation, all tunnels and wells and drops of water. All old stuff, you can't tell me. I know'" (p.146). Nevertheless, in viewing the work as a creation modelled along the lines of Greek tragedy, one must look for the hero's *hamartia*, or his flaw. John Atkins says of Pincher Martin: "The flaw in his make-up is libido. There is little opportunity to exercise it on the rock. He (his race) has imperfections. He will overcome them by the exercise of intelligence."⁵⁷ As a modern tragic hero, Martin arouses, in the audience, resentment of his evil doings, sympathy for his sufferings, and fear when one recognizes the possibilities of a similar plight in one's own fallible self. To different degrees, Martin's tragic flaw, his libido and hence his unwillingness to accept death is shared by all human beings. Samuel Hynes' comments seem quite relevant in this regard:

When Golding was asked about the "mythical aspect" of Pincher, he replied that Pincher was "a fallen man ... Very much fallen---he's fallen more than most. In fact, I went out of my way to damn Pincher as much as I could by making him the most unpleasant, the nastiest type I could think of, and I was very interested to see how critics all over the place said, 'Well, yes, we are like that.' I was really rather pleased." He should not have been surprised that responsive readers found in this "nastiest type" an image of their own natures. Like all of Golding's major characters, Pincher is an embodiment of a proposition about human nature, rather than an individual; in so far as we recognize Greed as a sin to which we are prone, we must say, 'Yes, we are like that.'⁵⁸

The modern Prometheus is chained to a rock made of his own aching tooth. The modern Christopher, the Christ bearer, is himself crucified on the "cross" (p.109) he creates for himself with seaweed---the crucifixion of a modern man. The different first name, "Christopher," Golding gives to his protagonist, as opposed to Taffrail's, is quite meaningful. Read in the light of biblical and mythical traditions, Golding's book is about the tragedy of modern man.

If this conclusion were pushed a little further, most of the characteristics displayed by the hero could perhaps be applied to an even wider perspective. As cited in the previous section, both Prometheus and Martin reflect on the cause of "the tragedy of man," namely consciousness and intelligence, which prevent man

⁵⁷John Atkins, "Two Views of Life," p.85.

⁵⁸S. Hynes, *William Golding*, p.31-32.

from "letting go." This "Greed for life," or "libido," dates back to the very dawn of human civilization. Before this dawn, the Neanderthals were living in a joyful darkness and did not have any concept of the preciousness of life, as shown in *The Inheritors*. In *Pincher Martin*, every time the hero comes out of the water-hole, he crawls "backwards," a highly meaningful movement of retrogression, along with numerous other "reverse" actions. "If one went step by step---ignoring the gap of dark and the terror on the lip---back from the rock, through the Navy, the stage, the writing, the university, the school, back to bed under the silent eaves, one went down to the cellar. And the path led back from the cellar to the rock" (p.173). It all becomes a cycle, but it is more than a cycle of an individual's life---it could include the bigger cycle of human history. With this backward movement, Martin is not only reduced back to the dark cellar of his childhood, or only to the nakedness of his birth when he strips all his clothes, or even before his birth when he inserts himself back into the vaginal crevice, but all the way back to the beginning of human civilization. By crawling backwards from the water-hole, he is reduced to the level of the Neanderthals. Pincher Martin is indeed a Neanderthal in his use of "pictures that presented themselves at random" (p.93).

Like the rest of his race, Martin is an "inheritor" of both the Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens*, the dual nature of which is dramatically realized in the hero's "doubling" Greed and the "shepherd" (p.118). In view of his crucifixion, Martin, for all his evil qualities, can also, if a little ironically, be accepted as a twentieth century version of Jesus Christ. The double quality makes him all the more human. In an enactment of this tragedy, the entire human race is like Martin:

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players:

They have their exits, and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts,

His acts being seven ages.

Martin plays many parts on his rock and his acts are but seven days, though one "hour on this rock is a lifetime" (p.45). With the development of astronomy, as Havelock puts it, "Our own rocks that once boiled like the sun, and later saw the dinosaurs wallowing in the swamp, shrivel to a speck of dust, a passing incident" (p.4). Even God's existence can be viewed as temporary. Prometheus, like Martin,

is not awed by the absolute power of his god.⁵⁹

Let him play out his little act of power.

His role in heaven lasts but for an hour. (p.171)

Some of his last lines are also illuminating in connection with Golding's protagonist:

Let total dark be my body's fate,

Hurled into hell precipitate,

Caught in unyielding vortices

Of Necessity's cosmic purposes.

Whatever the peril, the doom, the pain,

Self-existent I still remain. (p.179)

Martin expresses essentially the same sentiment in his last-ditch unyielding struggle for self-existence: "I have considered. I prefer it, pain and all.... To the black lightning!" (p.197). This conviction lends Martin courage in his final voiceless and wordless utterance: "I shit on your heaven!" (p.200) Then he is seen to be worn away and possibly disappear into the "crack" which is "utter," "absolute," and "three times real" (p.200). What about Prometheus? The play by Aeschylus reveals: *"As the last lines are uttered, the colossal figure of the Forethinker, with its cliff, topples into the abyss"* (p.181). Both works share a similar ending.

The suffering of the world results from man's stubborn desire to cling on. Because of this desire, Martin, "young and strong and handsome with an eagle profile and wavy hair" is "squeezed thin," "weak," "marred," mouth "sticking out," joints "like knobs," limbs "like sticks," face "fallen with age," and hair "white with salt and suffering." The biological clinging on leads to biological decay, which contrasts with the biblical concept of letting go. Interestingly enough, it also brings to mind many Oriental ideas concerning the willingness to die, though quite different from the Christian tradition.

The world is full of sufferings according to Buddhism. Therefore death has always been considered an easy way out. Owing to the sanctity of human life, one

⁵⁹In his book, Havelock is consciously integrating the two images of authority from the Greek and from the Biblical traditions: "Zeus is indeed Jehova, god of battles and a jealous god, smiter of his enemies, visiting the sins of the fathers on the children." (p.58)

is not supposed to commit suicide without a good reason. Therefore, when opportunities arrive, a person, especially a young man or young woman would die quite cheerfully, not only to end worldly sufferings but also to prove one's worthiness, loyalty, honour. Often compared with flowers falling when they look the best, though to the pity of the beholder, the chance to die at the prime of one's life is highly valued. In practical terms, because there is reincarnation, nothing is lost with death. In fact, an early death, which means less sin committed, could be a short cut to a higher stage of being in a coming cycle.

However, Martin is a character in Western literature and hence is made to face his "second death." One death only makes him a hero in the mundane world. What about the after-world? Before his "second death," he is given a choice: if he resists this death because of his "libido," he is to remain in his self-created universe, whether Purgatory or Hell, or perhaps Paradise; if he accepts death, he is likely to go to heaven, which is taken as eternal life. This, shall one say, is a fundamental paradox in Christianity---the "technique" to seek "life" through accepting "death"---which Martin fails to understand. And, as far as the book reveals, he opts for the second alternative quoted earlier from *Pincher Martin, O.D.*, "better be a live convict than a dead hero." In the sense that most would have preferred life to death, one could say that Martin is no better or worse than the average human being, no better or worse than his predecessor, Martin O.D.. Martin is a "public hero" in this world because he dies, though maybe an antihero in the after-world; he is a hero in human terms, though maybe an antihero in God's terms. The difference between Martin and the rest of his race is only that he is already dead and cannot regain his worldly existence, as far as his civilization dictates, by the exercise of his libido, which only makes up his tragic flaw. This flaw can be viewed, rather than purely psychological, as a result of his intelligence, which enables him to see the preciousness of his life and prevents him from seeing the fatal fact that he is trying to apply common this-worldly concepts to a different other-worldly situation. With this insurmountable flaw, with the sudden turn of events when he is switched from the position of eating to the position of being eaten, Martin's tragedy, as far as the classical elements of construction are concerned, appears to be quite complete. *Pincher Martin* is a tragic hero.

The whole of the Christian religion is in a sense geared to a will to live, rather than to die. The original sin committed by Adam and Eve is that they, by misled judgement, eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge instead of the tree of life. Ever since their Fall, which allegedly impoverished and tainted the nature of man, every human effort has been devoted in the religious sphere to a redemption of this lost eternal life. An atheist would see the entire Christian religion as derived from a fantasy, not totally different from the one Martin has, that somehow life can be made to last forever. This obsession, inherent in the Christian civilization, with "life"---in spite of the presumed distinction between this world and the next---as a primary purpose and ultimate goal can be viewed from outside as indirectly and subconsciously driven by a "Greed for life,"⁶⁰ if "libido" is too strong a word. The pragmatism of "no pains, no gains" or "lose some, gain some" applied to the "technique" of giving up one's earthly existence in order to "achieve" eternal life is merely a higher stage than Martin's principle of living "at all cost." If the whole civilization is like that, why should Martin bear all the blame simply for clinging on? Viewed in an extended perspective, what Martin persists in is nothing other than the Christian tradition.

Whether the analogous myth is Christian or Greek, the Fall could be described as a result of man's egocentricity. Every nation tends to put their part of the "rock" in the centre of their map and, to this day the Chinese, who used to believe that the earth was "square," like "a tin box," still refer to their land as "the Middle Kingdom." Even science, which has managed to convince most that the earth rotates around the sun, has not quite brought everybody to believing that their solar system is not exactly the centre of the universe. It is perhaps human to think, as Martin does, that the self is always the "centre," a term Golding is so fond of using. In *Pincher Martin*, the "centre" is seen as conflicting with both nature and the supernatural, with the realities of both time and space, but above all, it is seen as conflicting with itself, symbolically displayed in the hero's fanatic struggle to tear his own clothes and inflict injury on his own body. In these conflicts where Martin wears different masks, or turns up behind many faces, from

⁶⁰Frank Kermode, "The Novels of William Golding," in *Source Book*, ed. Nelson, p.116.

episode to episode, it is difficult for the reader to take a consistent side. However, as in a good tragic drama, it is even more difficult for the audience to just sit back and watch. Therefore, since the fall of Martin is shared by the rest of his race, one could probably settle for the somewhat vague statement: "Yes, we are like that."

Chapter 3

HAPPY FAULT: The Fall in a Socio-Historical Context

Night and Day

Are tiny blows of the hammer of time

Wearing the ancient rock away.

---William Golding, *The Lonely Isle*

In a recent British television series based on Don Cupitt's book *The Sea of Faith*, the audience had a rare chance to view in one episode an enactment of the famous scene from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (*Die Frohliche Wissenschaft*). The madman with a lantern in the morning cries out incessantly: "I seek God!" "Whither is God?" "We have killed him---you and I." In *The Gay Science*, the heart-rending questions go on: "Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up and down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing on us?"¹ Finally, the madman writes on a signboard "*Gott ist tot*" ("God is dead").

The death of God, seen from a sociological point of view, could be an inevitable result of the Fall or the death of Man. Since, according to Pincher Martin, God is created by man in his own image and is permitted only to use his

¹Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufman, New York, Random House, 1947, p.181.

own vocabulary, He must comply in other respects as well. If the death of man is recognized as a biological necessity, then so must be that of God. As in *Pincher Martin*, God, an image of authority, is created from the very beginning of Christian religion as a practical antagonist to man's egocentricity. That is why, when Martin sees and makes the point that God is nothing more than a projection of his mind and hence is not by itself an independent and absolute entity, he must sooner or later come to the conclusion that He must also die, although that point is not made explicit in the book. Indirectly, by pointing out the contradictions in the theology of God and by breaking away, a process started in his childhood when he turns away from the terror of darkness and at the same time "away from all suns," the hero kills God. This unsaid action, arguably, not only makes it necessary for the dead Martin to recreate God, but also can be viewed as, though indirectly, the root cause of his final Fall when he is faced with "an infinite nothing" and feels "the breath of empty space." At the end of Chapter 13, the audience sees the black lightning "continually closing in" on Martin:

The lightning crept in. The centre was unaware of anything but the claws and the threat. It focused its awareness on the crumbled serrations and the blazing red. The lightning came forward. Some of the lines pointed to the centre, waiting for the moment when they could pierce it. Others lay against the claws, playing over them, prying for a weakness, wearing them away in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy. (p.201)

The claws of Martin are seen as being worn away by black lightning. But if God has already been killed and non-existent as an outside force, and if the black lightning is only a figment of Martin's imagination, then what is really being worn away is only the two opposing forces of Martin himself locked with each other. In the above quotation, the claws and the centre are described as two separate things. Though the threat is there waiting to pierce it, while all the rest of Martin is reduced and worn away, the centre still remains largely intact to the last moment. What exactly is this centre? It could not be equivalent to the self, because the self includes the claws. It is said to be the centre of everything: "There was at the centre of all the pictures and pains and voices a fact like a bar of steel, a thing--- that which was so nakedly the centre of everything that it could not even examine itself. In the darkness of the skull, it exists, a darker dark, self-existent and indestructable" (p.45). Although the body of Martin is dead and his personal quality of Greed, symbolized by the pair of claws, is worn away, the centre is "self-existent and indestructable," echoing Prometheus' words "Self-existent I still remain" (p.179, Havelock). The thundering spade one hears, the paraffin applied to the

corpse, may not necessarily and exclusively have been meant for Martin. In the Madman's words in Nietzsche: "Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? God, too, decomposes!"² As "an epic of human endurance"³, *Pincher Martin* seems like an effort to make some sense out of the chaos brought about by the modern man's realization that God is non-existent and man is put to the centre of the stage. "It is by this dawning self-consciousness of the will to truth that ethics must now perish. This is the great spectacle of a hundred acts that will occupy Europe for the next two centuries, the most terrible and problematical but also the most hopeful of all spectacles."⁴ The dialectical consequences of the death of God---terrible and hopeful---have given rise to a new development in Western philosophy.

With the death of God, the myth that had governed the Western world for centuries evaporated. An "empty space" is left in the value system. Liberated from the heavy burdens of tradition, the Western man, instead of feeling relieved, seems lost in his new-found freedom. There is general confusion in the fundamental concepts of human tradition: what is up, what is down, no one could tell, as if in the loss of gravity in a "free fall." Modern Western literature is full of this spectacle of the death of God. Sartre even bases his entire philosophy of existentialism on it. Less passive than the moans and sighs of some modern writers and less aggressive than the fiery anger of others, Golding's novels aim at achieving a certain shock effect in a largely insensitive world. Like Nietzsche, and also like Lu Xun, he uses a mad man---a mad sailor on a rock---to explore some of the most fundamental issues of human existence, perhaps because "one can write out in imaginative situations something that one's got no business to promulgate."⁵ Within the realm of literary convention, a writer could only get away with certain statements, self-contradictory and controversial at the outset, when they are made through the character who is "raving mad" (p.190). Golding's statements, though somewhat different from that of Nietzsche, are quite in the same line as that of Lu Xun. In *Pincher Martin*, Golding's observation of the Chinese box and the

²*The Gay Science*, p.181.

³Kinhead-Weekes and Gregor, *Critical Study*, p.126.

⁴Quoted from Don Cupitt, *The Sea of Faith* (London: BBC, 1984), p.207.

⁵*Conversation with Medcalf*, p.12.

preparation of the Chinese dish with the philosophy of "eat or be eaten" is, if indirectly, derived from a tradition which Lu Xun describes as "four thousand years of man-eating history" in his "A Madman's Diary"⁶. Maybe this man-eating history is not only true of China, but also of the West. Men, who are fallen, "eat" each other, hence the modern version of the Golden Rule: Do unto others before they do unto you.

Read in the context of the development of English and Western literature, Golding's myth is obviously destructive (the function of a "destroyer") of the traditional one. The reason for this destruction may be seen in different lights. The traditional myth, by which is meant all the works Golding's counteraction is aimed at roughly put together,⁷ may be seen as naive in the twentieth century context. Starry-eyed futurism, popular a century or two ago, would appear out of place to the modern reader. The world has changed, so must the writer. But, one may argue, the Fall of man did not occur after the second world war. Most of the problems of the present century are not new ones. The act of "eating" is seen as covering the entire civilized history of man.

History can be viewed from different points. A British naval officer sees a certain battle from an angle opposite^{to} that of a native in the colony. In the same way, perception varies between the Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens*. In this sense, one could say, a more comprehensive view of world events has been prevented by the inadequacy of communication in the past and has been made more possible by twentieth century technology.

On the other hand, the optimistic attitude may have been needed at the time. The traditional myth-makers, by way of setting heroic examples and making the world look ever progressive, ~~are~~ in fact carrying out a kind of propaganda in order to keep the community together. Like the pragmatic Chinese literary worker, they may have been deliberately serving a social function---as means to a good end, such as stability. In either case, the writers should not be blamed, when they are examined in their specific historical perspective, and the same sense of history also justifies Golding's destruction. He is able to see the other side of the coin and, as well as being unpleasant, is also quite "honest" in his own right. He faces the world's problems and is not afraid of talking about them.

⁶Lu Xun, *Call to Arms*, p.12.

⁷Such as *The Gorilla Hunters*, *The Coral Island*, *The Grisly Folk*, *The Outline of History*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pincher Martin*, *O.D.*---the list can go on and can hardly be exhaustive.

In Golding's world, evil decides everything. Evil, as an abstract, *a priori* and eternal quality, exists within every human being, irrespective of his social, historic and economic background. The reason why it plays such an important role lies in the ignorance of man regarding himself, especially his evil nature. This ignorance, according to Golding, is the greatest misfortune man suffers and is the cause of all worldly misfortunes. A common criticism of Golding from the empiricist concerns his theory of knowledge. Since the allegedly "idealistic" tendency of Golding's epistemology can be seen as derived from a long theological and literary tradition, in which the question about mind and matter does not seem immediately relevant and is often beyond the scope of logical proof, this side of Golding will be left out of the present argument.

The core of the criticism in the Marxist circles lies in the allegation that Golding chooses to leave aside all the specific factors causing the general crises of human civilization in the twentieth century and tries to concentrate on what he sees as the key issues of human existence in terms of human nature. The convenient framework he adopts from the Christian religion of the eternal darkness of man's heart to the exclusion of the supposedly "objective laws" of social development is apparently less than acceptable to the Marxist. That is why Golding has been a "target" for repudiation from some sociological literary critics.⁸ His alleged attempt to provide an all-embracing answer, supra-class, supra-historical, to the fundamental questions of the modern world is said to leave no question answered. In this context, a well-known criticism of Feuerbach has often been cited in the Marxist circle to refer to one who allegedly pretends to provide a sort of panacea to world's problems: "In short, the Feuerbachian theory of morals fares like all its predecessors. It is designed to suit all periods, all peoples and all conditions, and precisely for that reason it is never and nowhere applicable."⁹ The validity of this criticism, regarding Golding as supra-class and supra-historical, will now be examined.

Before going into any evidence in his work, it appears necessary to point out the pluralistic feature of Golding's work. The courage in stepping out to say the "trite" thing is itself a counteraction. Another example, as demonstrated in the

⁸For example, Qiou Xiaolong, "A Negation of Traditional Myth," *Foreign Literature Studies*, No.2 (1985), p.25

⁹F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950), p.59.

previous chapters, is the double-edged criticism, directed, for instance, at both God and Man, which cuts through, among other things, the "straight jacket" of Christian theology.

As in the case of *Pincher Martin*, a similar approach of multiple readings can be applied to most of Golding's novels. And in this respect, Golding is by no means alone---different levels of literary expression appear rather common in modern fiction and indeed they seem to distinguish serious literature from best-selling thrillers. However, in spite of all the different understandings of the book presented in the previous chapter, *Pincher Martin*, while thematically against the stream, still remains at the outset a strongly allegorical book about the Day of Judgement, the conflict between man and God or within man himself, and the tragedy of the Fall. The somewhat simplistic views adopted by the above-mentioned criticism, as well as some positive commentaries, tends to concentrate on the religious side of Golding and ignore the pluralistic attitude inherent in almost all of Golding's novels. Religion can be as "reductive" as Marxism when the intended pluralism is left out.

The typical Marxist criticism of Golding for being divorced from society sees only one side of Golding as "a religious man." In fact, as a novelist, Golding seems more concerned about society than many of his contemporaries. Apart from being the obvious "champion of the under-dog" as discussed in the first chapter, the counteractive Golding is also notably a social critic. With the formula "eat or be eaten," he is aiming at the above mentioned Golden Rule, at the rat-race typical of the present century. In order to survive in a cut-throat social environment, Pincher Martin has to do unto others before they do unto him. The success in the first part of his life proves the validity of this Golden Rule, condensed into one word "Eat."

The story of *Lord of the Flies* proves the same point: success comes to the one who is capable of violence and savagery. "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood" (p.75). The point is that this kind of violence is not only confined to the hunting ground and the battlefield. Similar shouts can also be heard in the cinema, at the football game, round the boxing ring and during other recreational activities. After discussing "the fierce passions that can be roused by cricket" and the beginning of ill feelings between Australia and England, Golding said: "It was George Orwell who commented on the destructive force of international contests. Anyone who has watched a television programme of a game between two European

nations must agree with him. There's savagery for you. There's bloodlust. There's ugly nationalism raising its gorgon head."¹⁰ Competitive sports showing the "brute" in man is perhaps common to all nations and has been discussed by many, but here Golding is specifically criticising the English, who attach extraordinary values to cricket. This brings out one of the consistent features in Golding's writing, namely his attempts to question some long-existing and well-established social institutions in the world at large, in the West in general, and in Britain in particular. Although similar attempt can be found in almost all serious writers including the British, this particular feature in Golding is brought under attention in the present thesis because he has been criticised as divorced from society.

The first to come under Golding's attack is the public school system in England. The boys in *Lord of the Flies* are mostly English public school boys. First of all, to be at school traditionally means to receive education, which has been taken as a necessary institution to improve human beings and sustain civilization ever since Plato. Secondly, to be at a public school means to enjoy the opportunity of the best education a society like Britain can provide. Thirdly, to be at an "English" public school means beyond any doubt that they are the most civilized and, for that matter, the most capable children in the world. As Jack says: "After all, we're not savages. We're English; and the English are best at everything" (p.47). The novel reveals explicitly what Jack is best at: hunting and killing, thus equating him with the depraved savage. The novel also reveals, though not as explicitly, what the naval officer is good at when the readers hear him say: "I should have thought that a pack of British boys---you're all British aren't you?--- would have been able to put up a better show than that---" And: "Jolly good show" (pp.222-23).

Golding's persistence in using terms like "English" and "British" does not seem accidental. He is not only criticising the English public school, but also the British Royal Navy, another highly prestigious social institution. Marching always in front of other military units, the Navy is the senior service, in which Golding devoted quite a few years in the prime of his life. The prestige of the Royal Navy came certainly with the great sea power which for a long time in history belonged exclusively to Britain. And it is to a great extent in connection with this sea power that optimistic adventure stories came into being, with their celebration of "English boys' pluck and resourcefulness, which subdues tropical islands as

¹⁰ Golding, "Fable," *The Hot Gates*, p.93.

triumphantly as England imposes empire and religion on lawless breeds of men."¹¹ Peterkin, the fat boy in *The Coral Island* who has grown up to be a lieutenant of the Royal Navy in *The Gorilla Hunters*, very much as Piggy would have grown up to be Pincher Martin, who is also a lieutenant of the same Navy, displays these talents.

'... I've been fighting with the caffirs, and the Chinamen, and been punishing the rascally sepoys in India, and been hunting elephants in Ceylon and tiger shooting in the jungles, and harpooning whales in the polar seas, and shooting lions at the Cape; Oh, you've no notion where all I've been.... But there's one beast I've not yet seen, and I'm resolved to see him and shoot him too---'¹²

To this lieutenant, Caffirs, Chinamen and sepoys are certainly no different from elephants, whales and lions. The Gorilla, referred to in the novel with a personal pronoun, is even more closely related to man: "the great ape---the enormous puggy---the huge baboon---the man monkey" (p.14), or more directly as the "hairy man" (p.176). Even Ralph, probably the most civilized of the three young Englishmen and one who is not as accustomed to killing as Peterkin, records his feeling before the hunting as follows:

I will never forget the powerful sensations of excitement and anxiety that filled our breasts when we came on the first gorilla footprint. We felt as, no doubt, Robinson Crusoe did when he discovered the footprint of a savage in the sand. (p.155)

Again, the analogy is to man: gorilla equals Friday or savage equals animal. Even more significantly, the model or "reference point" is Crusoe, who could have readily shot the native on his island as he would do to any wild beasts. Of course there is the feeling of pity and guilt after the killing, as commonly seen in any less than seasoned killer, all be it a temporary one:

Pity at first predominated in my heart, then I felt like an accomplice to a murder, and then an exulting sensation of joy at having obtained a specimen of one of the rarest animals in the world overwhelmed every other feeling. (p.162)

The feeling is apparently one that a relatively soft-hearted British person would have felt in killing a native in a colony. What the Royal Navy, represented by Peterkin here, has done in the past is what *Homo sapiens* have done to

¹¹Carl Niemeyer's comment about *The Coral Island*, quoted from Golding's "Fable" in *The Hot Gates*, p.89.

¹²Ballantyne, *The Gorilla Hunters* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1953), p.13.

Neanderthals who are in fact described by Wells as "gorilla-like monsters," though, arguably, the former is driven by a desire to "conquer and break,"¹³ whereas the latter more by fear and misconception as demonstrated in *The Inheritors*.

In *The Inheritors*, Golding is not just experimenting with language,¹⁴ nor is he merely writing "science fiction," his subject is history and society. By tracing the origin of the Fall back, this time not to the Garden of Eden as in *Lord of the Flies*, but to the twilight of human history, Golding's reaction to the law of the jungle presents itself on a fundamental level. In Chapter 11 of *The Inheritors* when the viewpoint is suddenly changed and the familiar figure, who has so far dominated the reader's sympathy and intimacy, appears as "the red creature," the entire human history at once flashes into focus. The creature could be an African cannibal or an American Indian as they are usually presented. To the conqueror, the red creature is indeed a monster, or "devil" as the baby is referred to by Marlan in *The Inheritors*. That is probably why *The Inheritors* has been taken, or mistaken, for a novel with anti-imperialist tendencies in a country like China. Even those writers generally sympathetic to the native cultures seldom go as far as attempting to imagine the world according to the relatively primitive and also innocent perception. In this way, Golding again is marching against the crowd.

If *Lord of the Flies* is only indirectly criticising the Royal Navy, some of Golding's later novels satirize it quite straightforwardly. According to *Pincher Martin*, the Royal Navy is composed of the incompetent Captain whose face is "big, pale, and lined, the eyes red-rimmed with sleeplessness and gin" (p.102), of the wooden-faced Signalmen who takes advantage of others with power borrowed from the captain (p.102), of the sycophant and lying Petty Officer (p.53), of Nathaniel who joins up because he is no good at anything else (p.155). And, of course, Martin who acts and cheats his way up the Naval hierarchy:

'We're considering whether we should recommend you for a commission. Cigarette?'

'Thank you, sir.'

...

¹³*Pincher Martin*, p.149.

¹⁴Of which a thorough study can be found in M. A. K. Halliday's "Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Enquiry into the Language of William Golding's *The Inheritors*" in *Literary Style: A Symposium*, ed. Seymour Chatman (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), pp.362-400.

‘How’s the life up forrard?’

‘It’s---endurable, sir.’

‘We want men of education and intelligence; but most of all, men of character. Why did you join the Navy?’

‘One felt one ought to---well, help, sir, if you see what I mean?’

Pause.

‘I see you’re an actor in civvy street.’

Careful.

‘Yes, sir. Not a terribly good one, I’m afraid.’

‘Author?’

‘Nothing much, yet, sir.’

‘What would you like to be then?’

‘One felt it was---unreal. Not like this. You know, sir! Here in this ship. Here we *are* getting down to the basic business of life---something worth doing. I wish I’d been a sailor.’

Pause.

‘Why would you like a commission, Martin?’

‘As an ordinary seaman, sir, one’s the minutest cog in a machine. As an officer one would have more chance of hitting the old Hun for six, sir, actually.’

Pause.

‘Did you volunteer, Martin?’

He’s got it all on those papers there if he chooses to look it up.

Frank.

‘Actually, no sir.’

He’s blushing, under that standard Dartmouth mask of his.

‘That will be all, Martin, thank you.’

‘Aye, aye, sir, thank you, sir.’

He's blushing like a virgin of sixteen. (pp.93-95)

The greedy "Pincher" is not only torpedoed and drowned, but also reduced to limpets and claws---a pathetic contrast to the glittering officer standing tall before Ralph. Apart from hysterical remarks like "curse the bloody Navy and the bloody war" (p.51), there is the ironically heroic music scene, cited in the previous chapter, featuring the orchestric "snatches of Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Holst" (p.164)---all three of them great composers from three great empires: Russia, Germany and Britain. While there is no clear indication as to the particular pieces chosen, "the heroism" "underlined" (p.164) by the power of the empires is certainly one that has always accompanied the "undefeated advance" (p.164) of the Royal Navy. And it is the obvious familiarity with the underlying heroism that inspires Martin to invoke them as "background music" (164) during his administration of ^{an} _^enema.

Even at a later stage when his tone of criticism in general has become softer, Golding still would not let go of his favourite target. In *Rites of Passage*, the ship is not exactly a civilian one. "Again, this time," said Golding, "I was gently pulling the leg of the Royal Navy which is, in this country, an awful thing to do."¹⁵ The ship, belonging to the Royal Navy, is therefore "really Britannia or Britain in little," according to Baker, and Golding did not object to this view, saying, "I suppose Britain is nearer home, so to speak, than anywhere else, but I don't think the book is aimed at Britain to the exclusion of any other country which suffers from class systems, like, say, India. Or like New England, for example, that I found far more like Old England than I could have believed."¹⁶ In this remark, Golding mentions the phrase "class system," which brings the current discussion on to the next feature of his social criticism.

When he wrote *Lord of the Flies*, Golding made special efforts to avoid "a Marxist exegesis": "The boys find an earthly paradise, a world, in fact like our world, of boundless wealth, beauty and resources ... They did not have to fight for survival... If disaster came, it was not to come through the exploitation of one class by another."¹⁷ Some fifteen years after the above quoted remark, Golding reaffirmed his position against Marx, calling him, along with Darwin and Freud,

¹⁵James R. Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," p.161.

¹⁶Baker, "Interview," p.161.

¹⁷*The Hot Gates*, p.89.

"reductionist"---"the three most crashing bores of Western World."¹⁸ This may be partly why Golding has been under attack from some Marxist critics, the argument of which can be summed up in M. Zinde's words: "However, the author analyses these [social] problems in a very one-sided fashion: in analysing society, he leaves its motive forces outside his field of vision; in examining man, he neglects the social factors in his existence. Golding lacks a necessary historical perspective in his thought, and this prevents him from understanding the vital processes taking place in man's inner world. By trying to fit life into his subjective framework and generalise his descriptions to the maximum, Golding impoverishes life."¹⁹ What Zinde seems to mean here by phrases like "motive forces," "social factors," "historical perspective" and "vital processes" can be vaguely understood to be the notion of social classes. It may be correct to say that Golding deliberately keeps away from the nineteenth century Marxist concepts of social classes in terms of intensified exploitation of man by man.²⁰ However, he is by no means ignoring the concept of social classes, especially the English class system: "I think an Englishman who is not aware of the classic disease of society in this country, that is say, the rigidity of its class structure---he's not really aware of anything, not in social terms," said Golding.²¹

The above mentioned institutions of the public school and the Royal Navy under Golding's scrutiny are basically class-oriented. Apart from the conflict between the military and the clergy, the church and the state, *Rites of Passage* is also about the conflicts between different classes. Golding puts it even more straightforwardly: "It's all about class, isn't it? It's making some urgent statements about class. Unless we can get rid of it or at least blunt the pyramid or make it a little less monumental, we're done, we're finished, and it had better happen quickly."

²² *The Pyramid*, "the most purely English" of Golding's books according to Baker

¹⁸ *A Moving Target*, pp.186-87.

¹⁹ M. Zinde, "The Philosophical Parables of William Golding," *Twentieth Century English Literature: A Soviet View* (Moscow: Progress Publishing House, 1980), p.285.

²⁰ Golding makes quite clear his anti-reductionist attitude in "Belief and Creativity."

²¹ Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," p.136.

²² Baker, "Interview," p.160.

(p.152), is most closely focused on "the class barriers in English society."²³ In this book: "The village and the people [Golding creates] are so quaintly class-ridden. There's so much snobbism, and [Golding seems] to build on a geographical and social reality that is English."²⁴

The pyramid of social classes seems upside down in Golding's first novel, with the upper-middle class outnumbering the working class. Even Piggy, the only major character with a distinctly lower-class background, appears quite "bourgeois." Nevertheless, Golding, who has denied any analysis of *Lord of the Flies* in terms of social classes on two previous occasions,²⁵ agrees with what Baker has to say about the book: "... it's partly about the class structure" and "there is a concern with class and the errors in judgement caused by the patterns or assumptions that go along with class structure."²⁶ This contradiction in the author's own attitude towards a sociological reading of his novel indicates the complexity and the richness of the work itself. The fact that this particular reading has not been generally recognized or stressed in the critical commentary is largely due to the prevailing pessimism surrounding his work. Class structure, which can be viewed as Golding's description of his society, comes only as a side-stream at the time of creation, especially of his first novel, and manifests itself gradually with time both in the particular book under discussion and as he writes more and more novels. Again, by concentrating on this socio-historical reading, the present thesis is intended to complement, rather than contradict in any exclusive sense, the main-stream of Golding and his criticism.

Golding does not take English society as his target because he is specially disgusted with England; nor is it meant to be an exclusion of other societies. On the contrary, he is interested in the British society because he is British, in much the same way as Lu Xun's aiming at the Chinese society and history. Interestingly enough, Golding of all people is also quite aware of certain aspects of the Chinese culture. The story concerning the "patency" of the invention of gunpowder in *Envoy Extraordinary*, mentioned in the last chapter, is one example. According to

²³Zinde, p.284.

²⁴Baker, "Interview," p.153.

²⁵Namely the above mentioned essays "Fable" and "Belief and Creativity."

²⁶Baker, "Interview," p.136.

Golding, the fact that Phanocles, the Greek inventor, is sent by "a wise Caesar" to China, supposedly "delays the industrial revolution by about a thousand years."²⁷ The similar "Chinese connection" is found in *Pincher Martin*, which will be examined later in the chapter. It was in the United States when Golding said: "I condemn and detest my country's faults precisely because I am so proud of her many virtues. One of our faults is to believe that evil is somewhere else and inherent in another nation. My book was to say: you think that now the war is over and an evil thing destroyed, you are safe because you are naturally kind and decent. But I know why the thing rose in Germany. I know it could happen in any country. It could happen here."²⁸ And it is because of this focus on his own society that Golding's criticism achieves its universal application. In this way, Golding's moral awareness, with its specific social and historical background, differs fundamentally from Feuerbach's and avoids Engels' above criticism---at least on the grounds of its generality.

In spite of its obvious religious framework, Golding's discussion of the evil nature of man is not outside current social reality. His image of the Fall is presented very much against concrete social backgrounds and with a distinct awareness of history. With a reversed point of view, Golding realizes that "history is really no more than a chronicle of original sin."²⁹ "Man, unless he is prevented somehow, will turn away from God."³⁰ Man is fallen. If one is to stop here, then Golding is no doubt a pessimist. The criticism of Golding is often seen as centred on this question of pessimism versus optimism, especially in the Marxist circle since the question is considered of crucial significance in human progress. In examining the socio-historical side of the fallen man in Golding, it is necessary also to look at this question.

The remarkable change, in the development from traditional to modernist

²⁷Baker, "Interview," p.159.

²⁸*The Hot Gates*, p.89.

²⁹Baker, "Interview," p.134.

³⁰Baker, "Interview," p.144.

literatures in the West, lies in the disappearance of the convictions, ideals, standards, associated with the rising bourgeoisie. All these are summed up, in Annett Rubinstein's words, as "the truthful myth." When this myth is gone, what remains is only a "waste land," desolate and melancholy. However, human beings are never ready to accept their fate and the waste land is never devoid of all myth. One myth dies only to give rise to another, one that is specially suited to the modern world and modernist literature. Northrop Frye emphasizes the even stronger mythical feature in modernism: "It is fortunate that art does not have to wait for critical theory to keep pace with it. The age that has produced the hell of Rimbaud and the angels of Rilke, Kafka's castle and James's ivory tower, the spirals of Yeats and the hermaphrodites of Proust, the intricate dying-god symbolism attached to Christ in Eliot and the exhaustive treatment of Old Testament myths in Mann's study of Joseph, is once again a great mythopoeic age."³¹

Adopting a largely developmental approach, Frye describes the movement of literature as cyclical, like the rotation of the four seasons of the year: from comedy ("the mythos of spring"), through romance (summer), tragedy (autumn), to irony and satire (winter).³² A particular phase in literary history is the direct reflection of the prevailing mood of the era, the *Zeitgeist*. All literary trends, as the Marxist sees it, are formulated within the historical framework of a given time. In this sense, Frye's description of the modern age, though from a not so historical point of view basically at odds with Marxist theories, seems unwittingly to fit in with the historical framework of the twentieth century. When the world is seen to be torn with one war after another: "The human figures of this phase are, of course, *desdichado* figures of misery or madness, often parodies of romantic roles...."³³ As far as characterization is concerned, many contemporary writers are doing just that. Golding's work, especially his earlier fiction, is full of these "*desdichado* figures of misery and madness" and they do parody romantic roles, as observed by Frye. But this is not an end in itself: "on the other side of this blasted world of repulsiveness and idiocy, a world without pity and without hope, satire begins again."³⁴ In his conclusion, as an example to illustrate the changing view of literature, Frye cites a scene from Dante's *Divine Comedy*:

³¹Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p.423.

³²Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp.158-239.

³³*Anatomy*, p.238.

³⁴*Anatomy*, p.239.

From this point of view, the devil is no longer upright, but stands on his head, in the same attitude in which he was hurled downward from heaven upon the other side of the earth. Tragedy and tragic irony take up into a hell of narrowing circles and culminate in some such vision of the source of all evil in a personal form. Tragedy can take us no farther; but if we persevere with the mythos of irony and satire, we shall pass a dead centre, and finally see the gentlemanly Prince of Darkness bottom side up.³⁵

Mythos is one of the basic features of modernist literature, with new myths built on the debris of old ones. In the eyes of the modern and fallen man, the world is indeed bottom side up, and this reverse view is not limited to Hell as Frye observes in Dante, but applies equally to Heaven. The image is quite consistent in *Pincher Martin*. As soon as Martin reaches his rock, "the sea knocked him down and stood him on his head" (p.37). Without trying to regain an upright position, Martin's "effort was to stay down and under control," "as though he were winning territory" (p.37). With the "evil" eyes of a fallen man "looking in this reversed world" (p.103), Martin not only sees the saintly Nathaniel as "a bat hanging up-side down from the roof of a cave" (p.102), but also views the Garden of Eden and the apple tree quite differently from a believing Christian:

There was an engraving in the recess too. It was like a tree upside down and growing down from the old edge where the leaves were weathered by wind and rain. The trunk was a deep, perpendicular groove with flaky edges. Lower down, the trunk divided into three branches and these again into a complication of twigs like the ramifications of bookworm. The trunk and the branches and the twigs were terrible black. Round the twigs was an apple blossom of grey and silver stain. As he watched, drops of water dulled the stain and lay in the branches like tasteless fruit. (p.177)

In *The Divine Comedy*, when Dante and Virgil see the "Prince of Darkness bottom side up," they realize that, instead of falling, they were actually rising and finally found themselves emerging "on to" the surface of the southern hemisphere before they start climbing Mount Purgatory. This is a strikingly clever and interesting way of working out a seemingly dead knot, especially to one writing a thesis in "the Antipodes." Compared to the gloomy ambiguity of some Christian and other myths with regard to death and hell, this lateral thinking derived from an essentially pluralistic tradition is at once refreshing, imaginative, and perhaps even scientific. It is also inevitable. Since science proves the world to be global with the gravity in the centre, a fall from one end is bound to be a rise from the other.

³⁵ *Anatomy*, p.239.

According to Golding, Pincher Martin, after "falling down through this world of water,"³⁶ is actually experiencing Purgatory.³⁷ In this context, it might seem interesting if the island on which Pincher Martin's corpse is recovered were somewhere near Australia. Nevertheless, the final chapter suggests otherwise--the environment, the name of the local inhabitant, and the language used have a distinct Scottish tone. What is more, in Chapter 9, there is a scene with Martin seeing "himself riding a seal across the water to the Hebrides" (p.138). The basic realism of Golding's novel does not allow a decaying body to penetrate the volcanic basalt of the Hebrides to reach the other side of the globe through the centre of the burning Hell, in a manner similar to Dante's. However, quite a few trips to "the Antipodes"³⁸ have been made in Golding's other works, if only across the surface of the earth instead. The first such voyage is made in his first book, *Lord of the Flies*, with the plane crashing half way. It was followed by other similar trips to the new world, till finally the destination becomes specifically Australia in *Darkness Visible* and *Rites of Passage*. Crompton emphasizes the ritualistic meaning of the "descent into an underworld." In analysing Matty's ordeal in *Darkness Visible*, he offers an explanation that "like Dante or Aeneas before him, he may be symbolizing crossing from one world into another, and his elaborate ritual thus be interpreted as some kind of rite of passage."³⁹ Both Matty and Talbot actually reach Australia in their different "ritualistic" manners. Martin, with his death, is also crossing from one world into another, though he does not quite make it to where he is supposed to be because of his reluctance to let go.

On a mythical level, however, what is found of Martin at the end of the book could be seen as only his body still wearing seaboots, his earthly being, which has very little to do with the bulk of the story. The "centre" of Martin, his soul, is arguably purged of its "greedy" nature when, in the last scene, the pair of claws, locked with one another out of Greed, are seen as separated from the "centre," and worn away by the black lightning. Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor appear in support of a division of the protagonist: "Finally there appears, as the terrified voice had predicted, what is either the Truth itself, or Madness indeed; either the last figment

³⁶William Golding in *Conversation with Stephen Medcalf*, p.1.

³⁷*Conversation with Medcalf*, p.14.

³⁸Baker, "Interview," p.137.

³⁹Don Crompton, *A View from the Spire*, pp.109-10.

of Pincher's crazy imagination, or that great Mind of which Pincher is only a projection, the producer of the whole drama If it is 'Martin,' it is Martin who died and was united with God; if it is not madness, it speaks with the voice of God insofar as Pincher can hear ..."⁴⁰ According to them, the hero is divided into two parts---Martin and Pincher. In fact, if one looks at the whole book, there are at least three Martins. There is Christopher Hadley Martin, the Naval lieutenant, according to the disc on his neck, who is dead and carried away on a stretcher to be honoured as a "dead hero." Then there is Martin, the centre that witnesses the destruction of the claws and is possibly "united with God." Finally, there is Martin, the Pincher who is reduced and faced with two possibilities: either total annihilation---"better annihilation than slavery"⁴¹ or "better be a live convict than a dead hero"⁴²---or his self-created "Heaven" forever. What used to be Martin is now taken as in three separate places: the "body" returns to earth as a hero; the "soul" may be saved in Heaven, according to the above-quoted suggestion by Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor; in this case, only the "mind" is left to cling on to its own projection, which can be viewed as Heaven, Purgatory or Hell from different points. While the "soul" and the "mind" are often confused as one "centre" in Martin, a finer distinction does seem possible and his "projection" could somehow be narrowed down to a purely mental activity. In fact, the two forces, the intuitive and the rational, are seen as conflicting with each other from quite early in the book, with the former urging the hero to "give up" and "leave go," (p.45) whereas the latter, as "a machine in the head," (p.8) keeps rolling like a film projector. If "just to be Pincher is purgatory" and "to be Pincher for eternity is hell," then in the end, what seems to insist on being "Pincher for eternity" symbolized by a pair of greedy claws and therefore is finally condemned, by God or by Martin himself, could only be the "intellectual" part of Martin---again, "the crucifixion of intellectual man."

If, in line with what Golding says about being Pincher for eternity, Martin does turn up in Hell, he is likely to find himself, at least according to *The Divine Comedy*, in the company of all his artistic and intellectual predecessors. Indeed, there might even be a place for his creator, the "incompetently religious man" who is all the more artistic and intellectual. Golding did refer to the dark graveyard,

⁴⁰Critical Study, p.150.

⁴¹Havelock, p.72.

⁴²Taffrail, p.224.

which had caused him nightmares in his childhood when he allegedly turns away from God, as "a sort of halfway to being a friendly place," because "fifty per cent of the people one's ever met in one's life are, in fact, in that graveyard."

⁴³ Naturally, once past the dead centre, Martin might find himself rising, rather than falling, till he appears on the southern hemisphere at the foot of Mount Purgatory, which is supposedly where the story is set. In his own words: "I went through hell in the sea and in the funnel, and then I was so pleased to be safe that I went right over the top" (p.122). By "hell" though, Martin is apparently referring to the general meaning of the word as suffering. However, in view of what the book is about, in view of the repeated action of falling and going through hell in the book, such key words are bound to carry at least a double meaning. Along this line, after going through all the torture and hardship, Martin reflects on his situation: "There is a certain sense in which life begins anew now, for all the blotting paper and the pressure" (p.166). When he enters a new cycle and comes to the "new world," the "point of reference" (p.166) would be entirely different from that of the "old world." This process may be viewed from two angles. On the one hand, the renewed rising is no doubt a fundamental aspiration of the modernist literary myth. On the other hand, through a mythical black lightning, arguably, one gains a more profound perception and understanding of the relativity of reality, "Like the train that seems to move backwards when the other one steams away from beside it. Like hatched lines with one across" (pp.166-67). With this remark, one could see yet another significance in the numerous reverses and backward movements throughout the novel. By making darkness visible to his readers, Golding's fiction often provides a fresh look at the real world.

Like the cosmic Fall, the concept of Evil, particularly Greed, could also be seen as relative. The freshness of Golding's myth lies in the possibility, of which he himself may not have been fully aware at the time of writing, of a more dialectical, more comprehensive understanding of the concept of Greed in human history. Historically speaking, there is a contrast of views towards evil in social development. Industrialization, which played an outstanding role in human history by bringing unparalleled prosperity to the world, also did notorious evils to mankind, just like all the other stages of civilization. To the child labourer, the material civilization is evil. So is colonization in the eye of the colonial subjects.

However, "one remembers Orwell's sad comment that the worthwhile things

⁴³ *Conversation with Medcalf*, p.4.

done in India by the British would not have been performed by men of the Forster stamp."⁴⁴ According to Atkins, "at first view Pincher Martin, all guts and resolution, is repellent. Then we reflect that he gets things done, often things the rest of us appreciate."⁴⁵ As a "can-do" man, to use an Australian term, Martin is really Crusoe. What tends to confuse is the distinction between evil as a moral phenomenon and evil as a historical one. Like some of his fellow-countrymen in India, Martin can be seen as repellent in a moral sense, but resourceful in a historical sense. Without this distinction, the underlying attributes of the concept of evil, especially the concrete evil in the industrial developments, cannot be properly evaluated. Since Greed stands out in Golding's work as directly related to the Fall, the scope of the present thesis requires the omission of the other, perhaps less representative, forms of evil.

To define Greed as a dialectical and historical concept, Engels' exposition seems quite to the point:

With this (economic developments) as its basic constitution, civilization achieved things of which gentile society was not even remotely capable. But it achieved them by setting in motion the lowest instincts and passions in man and developing them at the expense of all his other abilities. From its first day to this, sheer Greed was the driving spirit of civilization; wealth and again wealth and once more wealth, wealth, not of society but of the single scurvy individual---here was its one and final aim.⁴⁶

This analysis of the function of Greed for wealth is one way of looking at the development of modern industrial civilization. It was the same "driving spirit" that enables the entrepreneurs to make money and to make contributions to human progress in history. Greed is an attribute of the very existence and progress of the present society.

Twentieth century crises illustrates this point. Modern writers like Golding are aiming at a stock-taking enquiry into this evil quality. By attributing this quality to the entire human race and by holding a negative attitude towards all human

⁴⁴John Atkins, "Two Views of Life," p.84.

⁴⁵"Two Views", p.84.

⁴⁶Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, New York, International Publishers, 1972, p.235.

progress, Golding is criticised as having created a subjective myth of idealism.⁴⁷ However, in another sense, this myth exposes the evils of society, thus embodying a profound negation of the traditional concepts, such as the typical Victorian smugness in *The Coral Island* or the over-optimistic rationalism of H. G. Wells,⁴⁸ and achieving a better understanding of the essence of the modern society. Could the dual feature of modern man, Intelligence and Greed, be more vividly symbolized than in *Pincher Martin*?

Amidst dreams and hallucinations, the hero is clinging desperately not only to his dying or dead body, but also to a blind egotism that keeps him in his self-created Purgatory, which turns out to be a dark abyss of nothing. From the original darkness of man's heart, as demonstrated in *Lord of the Flies*; through the overall darkness of history, as shown in *The Inheritors*; to the concluding darkness after man's death, as described in *Pincher Martin*; the picture is indeed gloomy. However, with his conclusions drawn from the darkness of the twentieth century reality, Golding's critique seems to go beyond the spheres of morality, touching on the intrinsic quality of the modern world. Golding's sense of history reveals the complexity of the concept of Greed and brings a sober evaluation of human existence.

Truth hurts. Reading Golding's novels is often a painful experience. One tends to wonder: is there no hope? Has Golding abandoned all the precious humanitarian ideals?

Golding once said ~~that he was~~ more tongue-in-cheek than most people assume. Such occasions can easily be found in *Pincher Martin*. Apart from the hero's own countrymen, the Chinese seem to get more than a mere mention in this particular book, especially around the central theme---the rationality behind Greed: "eat or be eaten." If the existence of the Chinese Box, "the fretted ivories, one inside the other" (p.95), can be testified, the factuality of the so-called Chinese Dish is questionable. "Greedy" as the Chinese may be, at least as far as gastronomy or "eating" is concerned and while the phrase "meat sprouts," which does sound like something "edible," is heard in folklore, the actual eating of maggots is never

⁴⁷ Qiu Xiaolong, p.30.

⁴⁸ Golding admires Wells' imaginative powers, as displayed in *Chips*, *Mr. Polly*, *Tono Gungay*, but not his ideas, as seen in his "propaganda pieces" such as *Science of Life* and *The Outline of History*. See Baker, "Interview," p.138.

recorded. And of course it is biologically impossible for a maggot, however successful, to grow out of proportion. The Chinese connection, meaning the various references to the Chinese culture, is no doubt one of Golding's tongue-in-cheek moments. However, since he is a native of that particular culture, the present writer does feel compelled to make some sort of response to Golding's gesture, and the response itself, with a slice of history, is intended to provide none other than a "point of reference" to the socio-historical significance of Golding's theme.

The debate between rationality and morality has been going on throughout human history. While science and technology, based on the rational and logical, have thrived in the West in the last centuries; they have been largely suppressed on an official level by the heavy hand of morality in China at least in the past two thousand years. From the very beginning of recorded Chinese history, the emphasis in philosophy has been put on a harmony with nature, to achieve the final goal of "oneness between heaven and man," by means of preserving heavenly righteousness and eliminating human desires. The Western concept of pursuing human desires, of conquering nature and of scientific progress is seen as at least partly ignored on the esteemed philosophical level. Prehistoric stories such as the one of Dayu taming the Yellow River flood is told generation after generation, only to be overshadowed by the legend of Emperor Zhou of centuries later, who ruled with righteousness and benevolence.

Confucius modeled his utopia on the society under the benevolent Emperor Zhou and came to the conclusion that "poverty is not to be feared as inequality." Although there are disagreements, on issues such as government administration, between Confucianism and other major schools of thought, notably the Taoist and the Legalist, the concept of harmony is more or less shared by all of them. And it is a harmony at the expense of development, competition and pursuit of wealth, derived from Greed which is often symbolized in Western literature by the act of striving and over-reaching. In Confucianism, as a dominating school of thought in China for the last two thousand years, the emphasis serves the practical requirement of ruling. The fact that harmony is preached does not mean there is no desire or competition among ordinary people, just as the slogan of equality does not eliminate exploitation. However, because of the long-established extreme centralization of a totalitarian power, the stagnation and mediocrity brought about by this hypocritical philosophy is beyond measure. In recent history, with all the rebellions and revolutions, this basic official philosophy has hardly been touched.

In the West, however, with a Christian tradition almost as rigid as Chinese philosophies if one were to think of the biblical statement about the camel and the needle's eye, a practical approach has been adopted to suit and to enhance the changed environment. Enlightened theologians and philosophers, instead of trying to suppress it, set out searching for ways to accommodate what is obviously unsuppressible within the underlying framework of their religion. Wealth and the efforts to accumulate wealth, and hence perhaps Greed for wealth, have become a guarantee to the kingdom of heaven.

In a recent National Opinion Poll run for *Mail on Sunday* in Britain, people were asked to make up their own lists of sins in order of the degree of deadliness. The reason why most people from various social groups put Greed at the top of their lists of new deadly sins may be looked at from different angles. First of all it may be explained that the present world is so gripped with Greed that people could not see anything else nearly as comparable being the root of all evils. One walks around and sees Greed written on everybody's face. Secondly, the constant drive of human race for more and better material things in the last few centuries, especially in the last few decades, has upset the equilibrium of the society. "Since about 1930," wrote a disillusioned George Orwell, "the world has given no reason for optimism whatever. Nothing is in sight except a welter of lies, hatred, cruelty and ignorance."⁴⁹ The twentieth century witnesses unseen economic and social crises, such as inflation, pollution, corruption. That is why more and more people are questioning the merits in the human possessive impulse and the insatiable Greed for wealth. From a third angle, one may almost seriously say: the reason why people dislike Greed most is that they themselves are greedy. Only greedy people see others as greedy: eaters more likely to feel the threat of being eaten. Living in a greedy world and not being able to run away from it, one tends to feel as gripped with Greed as Pincher Martin.

Martin has not been a good man---Man has not been a good man either---and the memory of his little sins and little pleasures is deployed not so much to throw light on him alone as to spread out from that one scene---temporary lieutenant dying on beastly rock---and impose an organization of almost inconceivable precision and profundity on the chaotic content of all our lives.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Orwell, *Critical Essays* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1946), p.139.

⁵⁰Wayland Young, "Letter from London," *Kenyon Review*, XIX (Summer 1957), p.480.

The sociological implications of statistics like this is beyond the scope of the present thesis, but one thing is quite clear. Western people, at least the more sensitive British who happen to be the subjects of the cited survey, are more and more aware of Greed as a wide-spread social disease and as the root of other human evils.

At a time when the West is seeking equilibrium for man and society from Oriental cultures of Confucianism and Taoism, China is all the more desperately seeking the Western concept of change and progress. The latter is justified in its need to overcome its inertia and stagnation, in the same way as the former is in its need to overcome its alienation. For a while, Greed was considered almost a virtue in China, when major national newspapers carried large photographs of smiling peasants counting bundles of money. Under such light, it is just as anti-historical to criticise the Chinese thirst for Western rationalism, as it is to say that the West is two thousand years behind China in morality.

The above generalization about the difference between Eastern and Western traditions could hardly justify the arbitrariness in imposing a Chinese reading on William Golding. After all, Golding is more or less writing for an audience sharing his own culture. However, from an Oriental point of view, Golding's metaphor with its Chinese connection seems to touch upon a fundamental irony of that ancient culture. Adopting a relative point of view, one could probably go beyond Martin's fallen state, and see his stubbornness as efforts at staying up, perhaps even rising.

To a certain extent, Greed, abandoned by the "moralizing" Westerners who have seen through material progress, is embraced by the "modernizing" Chinese. At this particular historical junction, as many Chinese scholars argue, the country needs striving, competition, individualism---all these "negative" ideas naturally associated in the West with Greed. In order to survive and develop, a new spirit of Greed is needed to create more wealth to satisfy desires, instead of suppressing desires to make do with the existing wealth. "By exceeding the proper limits in righting a wrong," as the proverb goes, the Chinese are doing what was done in the West when protestantism came into being.

Although Calvin's negative determinism has long been discarded by the liberal, one cannot but recognize the positive groundwork he laid down for the later development of a theory on the protestant ethic and its impact on the birth and growth of modern industrial society. Greed for wealth and success is viewed as

contributive not only to this-worldly satisfaction, but also to other-worldly happiness. "As Max Weber pointed out in his classic study, *The Protestant Ethic*, the Calvinist ethos, with its emphasis on the pursuit of material gain as a barometer of God's pleasure, was a necessary precondition for the establishment of a capitalist economic system."⁵¹ Weber's theory, more systematically explicated by Tawney, is regarded now in China as, instead of anti-Marxist, complementary to the formula of economic "base" deciding ideological "superstructure."

It is interesting to see the two largely polarized doctrines on human nature, with Christianity promulgating original sin and Confucianism advocating the original goodness of human nature,⁵² join hands to serve a historical necessity. In view of the stimulating interactions between East and West, Golding's Chinese connection seems immediately relevant to the socio-historical discussion of the quality of Greed in his fallen man.

The concept of the Fall is relative. What appears to be falling down in the northern hemisphere can now be viewed in line with Dante as rising up in the southern. The same imagery and the same principle of gravity should work just as well between East and West. As mentioned above, when the Orient is busy applying Weber's theory to its own cultural and social framework, the Occident, especially within literary circles, is more and more aware of, even paranoid about Greed. Following the Second World War, a strong sense of pessimism has been ruling the Western world.

As a "religious man" obsessed with the darkness of man's heart, Golding has always been regarded as a pessimistic writer. However, he himself does not look at the matter this way, and, on this point, Golding is quite consistent. As early as in the sixties, Golding said: "I am by nature an optimist; but a defective logic---or a logic which I sometimes hope desperately is defective---makes a pessimist of me."⁵³ In a dialectical sense, the view of a pessimist, who sees the world as evil and starts acting about it, is certainly more hopeful, and therefore arguably more optimistic, than that of an optimist, who sees the world as good and nothing needs done.

⁵¹Francis E. Kearns, "Salinger and Golding: Conflict on the Campus," in *Source Book*, ed. Nelson, p.153.

⁵²Although Hsun Tzu, no less a Confucian, saw human nature as evil (see Chapter 1), the Confucian school, embodying the most powerful ruling ideology, has almost all along been dominated in this respect by the doctrine of Mencius: "Human nature is naturally good just as water naturally flows downward." For details, see Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p.52.

⁵³Golding, "On the Crest of the Waves," *The Hot Gates*, p.126.

To a doomed world full of fallen men, Golding's attitude is at least more optimistic than, say, that of Schopenhauer. One of Schopenhauer's dialogues, which provides an imagery quite in tune with Golding, goes as follows:

Philaethes ... What I respect is truth, therefore I can't respect what opposes truth. Just as the jurist's motto is: *fiat justitia et pereat mundus* [let justice be done though the world perish], so my motto is: *vigeat veritas et pereat mundus* [let truth prosper though the world perish]. Every profession ought to have an analogous device.

Demopheles Then I suppose the physician's would be: *fiant pilulae et pereat mundus* [let pills be distributed though the world perish]---which would be the one most likely to be realized.⁵⁴

The profession of physician, whose motto is "most likely to be realized" according *Demopheles*, seems to be a favourite analogy which Golding tends to make of himself, especially in his role as a critic of society. In a letter to a Soviet literary critic, Valentina Ivasheva, dated July 1, 1967, Golding states: "Now---is the notice DANGER. LEVEL CROSSING pessimistic? Pessimism would write no warning because it wouldn't be worth the trouble." He said: "I see the terrors and horrors, the traps and labyrinths; I see the shattering beauty of the world, the miraculous wholeness and near infinite capacity of us two-legged creature. I see our disease and I see our health. But---and this is important---health is the one thing that needs no physician."⁵⁵ As a physician, Golding's diagnosis of the human disease as gripped with Original Sin seems gloomy and his prescription for self-knowledge seems difficult to follow. Nevertheless, "just as bitter medicine cures sickness, so unpalatable advice benefits conduct," goes a famous Chinese proverb.

"Man is a fallen being."⁵⁶ If that is a fact, the world has lived, and even thrived, with it for centuries. A more philosophical approach has long been adopted by Saint Augustin: "*O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem*. [O happy fault, which has deserved to have such and so mighty a Redeemer.]"⁵⁷ And Saint Francis de Sales puts it more directly: "Ruin brought us profit, since in effect human nature has received more graces by its Saviour

⁵⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1970), p.95.

⁵⁵ Valentina Ivasheva, "Epistolary Dialogue," *Soviet Literature*, Moscow, 1977, vol. 11, pp.48-49.

⁵⁶ *The Hot Gates*, p.88.

⁵⁷ *The Roman Missal*, ed. Abbot Cabrol (Tours: Mame and Sons, 1949), p.405.

redeeming, than ever it would have received by Adam's innocence, if he had persevered there in."⁵⁸ This self-justifying approach to the cosmic Fall, with the concealed commercial metaphor in the word "profit," has since entered the mainstream of Christian theology.

In literature, the picture is even brighter. Not only can the lost Paradise be later regained, but the Fall itself is not seen as totally negative. From the very beginning, the "happy fault" seems based, not on corrupting temptation and emotional weakness, but on logically sound argument, though not at all in the Augustinian sense. Whether Milton intended it or not, his "negative capability" makes Satan more than persuasive, his remarks "impregn'd With Reason" and "Truth":

Queen of this Universe, doe not believe
Those rigid threats of Death; ye shall not Die:
How should ye? by the Fruit? it gives you Life
To Knowledge; by the Threatner? look on mee,
Mee who have touch'd and tasted, yet both live,
And life more perfet have attaind then Fate
Meant mee, by ventring higher then my Lot.
Shall that be shut to Man, which to the Beast
Is open? or will God incense his ire
For such a petty Trespass, and not praise
Rather your dauntless vertue, whom the pain
Of Death denounc't, whatever thing Death be,
deterred not from atchieving what might lead
To happier life, knowledge of Good and Evil;
Of good, how just? of evil, if what is evil
Be real, why not known, since easier shunn'd?⁵⁹

In comparison, Raphael's argument in the previous book (Book 8) appears unconvincing and God's subsequent punishment unimaginative. Thank God Adam and Eve chose the "happier life." Had they done otherwise, would there be Paradise in the real sense? Corruption and knowledge go hand in hand. To err makes man human. Hegel did not need a Satan to make him say:

Man, created in the image of God, lost, it is said, his state of absolute contentment, by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Sin consists here only in Knowledge: this is the sinful element, and by it man is stated to have trifled away his Natural happiness. This is a deep truth, that evil lies in consciousness: for the brutes are neither evil nor

⁵⁸ Charles Davis, *The Study of Theology* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1962), p.174.

⁵⁹ John Milton, "Paradise Lost," *The Complete English Poetry of John Milton*, ed. John T. Shawcross, (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1963), p.409.

good; the merely Natural Man quite as little. Consciousness occasions the separation of the Ego, in its boundless freedom as arbitrary choice, from the pure essence of the Will---i.e., from the Good. Knowledge, as the disannulling of the unity of mere Nature, is the 'Fall', which is no casual conception, but the eternal history of Spirit. For the state of innocence, the paradisaical condition, is that of the brute. Paradise is a park, where only brutes, not men, can remain. For the brute is one with God only implicitly [not consciously]. Only Man's Spirit (that is) has a self-cognizant existence. This existence for self, this consciousness, is at the same time separation from the Universe and Divine Spirit. If I hold to my abstract Freedom, in contraposition to the Good, I adopt the stand-point of Evil. The Fall is therefore the eternal Mythos of Man---in fact, the very transition by which he becomes man.⁶⁰

The Fall is progress in its negative form. It is an inevitable and recurrent negation in the cause of history, exhibiting itself in its distinct way at different times. And different understanding and rationalization of this Fall comes as human society develops. In Hegel's view, "passions, private aims and the satisfaction of selfish desires are ... most effective springs of action." Without this "sinister," "immoral" passion,⁶¹ nothing great can be accomplished in history. He emphasized the historical role of the cosmic Fall which had generally been seen as a moral feature. In pursuing selfish interests, people's behaviour is first and foremost a historical phenomenon, and the world moves forward as a result of the Fall.

If the philosophers and theologians were merely touching upon the abstract concept of the cosmic Fall, Golding as a creative writer is much more specific in his perception. "As we have seen, what Golding wants to do is to show us the whole man, man as he is rather than as he sees himself. Man's 'fall' into consciousness is also his 'rise' into civilization; consciousness and civilization buttress one another up."⁶² Numerous examples of this "rise" and "fall" can be found in almost all of Golding's works, most notably in the historical reconstructions such as *The Inheritors* and *The Spire*. Both set in crucial historic junctions, the Fall is seen not only in the "Rise" from savagery to civilization as demonstrated in the former, but also in the "Rise" from paganism to Christianity in the latter---the Fall as inherent in the religion itself. Based on his personal experience during the second world war, Golding wants to take a fresh look at the whole issue of human evil in

⁶⁰G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), p.333.

⁶¹G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, pp.20-24. During the Enlightenment, passion would have generally meant evil passions.

⁶²Gabriel Josipovici, *The World and the Book* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.251.

its uniquely twentieth-century perspective. His approach is a modernistic one in its intentional inversion of the past values and ruthless mockery of the traditional sense of contentment.

As far as literary themes are concerned, those earlier writers, from whom Golding tends to "kick off"⁶³ such as Ballantyne, attempted to present a somewhat "positive" view of reality, an effort maybe to uphold the beautiful and good ideals of society. The twentieth century, after all the catastrophes, would find such positive views rather simplistic, too far removed from intricate realities of the world, even to the verge of being hypocritical. The goody-goodies in *The Coral Island* could only arouse irony in the mature reader, especially since, by some modern standards, they appear often "evil."

Besides, the positive view tends to require a highly limited issue and application. The happy endings in a considerable amount of nineteenth-century fiction, could not but confine ~~things~~ in a small "humanitarian" corner of the society, afraid of testing ~~their~~ carefully worked out "social ideals" beyond ~~their~~ narrow idealistic boundary. This view has long proved either obsolete or impracticable in the twentieth century. In order to win their changed audience, modern writers often devise new ways of presentation. While settings could be isolated, actions limited, characters simplified, situations grotesque, the actual issue often has universal applications. Instead of upholding the Good qualities of man, such as love, courage, kindness, as past writers did, Golding made great efforts in depicting the human Evil. Through a description of the opposite of the ideal, he is perhaps trying to put across, *via negativa*, his ideals.

What are humanitarian ideals? Do they really lie in Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* and *The Gorilla Hunters*? Golding would not find adequate grounds in the traditional literary framework to build his ideals. Therefore, he chose to put his readers through horrid scenes of madness, savagery, filth, slaughter, darkness and flame to shock them out of their inertia and make them long for their lost virtues and ideals. Wittgenstein, in his *Notebooks* 1914-16, calls this way of expression "the mystery of negation." "This is not how things are, and yet we can say how things are not."⁶⁴ Using negation to reveal the inhuman reality of the world, Golding

⁶³Crompton, p.6.

⁶⁴Quoted from Gabriel Josipovici, *The World and the Book* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.306.

seems to require his reader to work out a second negation, the negation of negation, so as to get to the true ideals of mankind. In Josipovici's words, "Golding, in *Pincher Martin*, gives us a true picture of what a man is by showing us all that a man is not and then negating that."⁶⁵ The double negative may well be an important feature of modern literature.

The knowledge of evil is naturally a negation to the affirmation of good. Engels used to compare Feuerbach with Hegel in their understanding of good and evil, and said of the former:

He appears just as shallow, in comparison with Hegel, in his treatment of the antithesis of good and evil. 'One believes one is saying something great,' Hegel remarks, 'if one says that "man is naturally good." But one forgets that one says something far greater when one says "man is naturally evil."' with Hegel evil is the form in which the motive force of historical development presents itself. This contains the twofold meaning that, on the one hand, each new advance necessarily appears as a sacrilege against things hallowed, as a rebellion against conditions, though old and moribund, yet sanctified by custom; and that, on the other hand, it is precisely the wicked passions of man---greed and lust for power---which, since the emergence of class antagonisms, serve as levers of historical development---a fact of which the history of feudalism and of the bourgeoisie, for example, constitutes a single continual proof. But it does not occur to Feuerbach to investigate the historical role of moral evil. To him history is altogether an uncanny domain in which he feels ill at ease.⁶⁶

With his novels, Golding digs into this "uncanny domain." Though his point of departure seems gloomy and his conclusion depressing, his efforts are quite forward-looking. Golding's outlook, shall one say, is optimistic, though in a negative form.

Hegel's dialectics emphasize the processes of negation---thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Can one say that Golding's works, among other works of modernism, embody an antithesis to tradition? Hegel is often said to get things up-side down.⁶⁷ Maybe it is a more philosophical way of looking at things around the world. In literature, Dante sees "the gentlemanly Prince of Darkness bottom side up," and the point of view is highly appreciated. Since Ralph in *Lord of the Flies* tends to stand on his

⁶⁵Josipovici, p.307.

⁶⁶F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950), pp.53-54.

⁶⁷Luo Shaodan, "William Golding," *Foreign Literature Studies* (Jan. 1984), p.121.

head whenever he is happy, since Martin is seen to be doing the same thing on his rock, though perhaps less intentionally, one wonders if Golding has the same habit. In a sense, Golding has almost made it his life-time career to stand the prototype of traditional thought on its head. His counteraction, providing an alternative point of view, transcends ~~beyond~~ the realms of literature and is often seen to be aimed at history, philosophy and social life in general.

CONCLUSION

At the end of a period of intensive M.A. research, particularly into a novel like *Pincher Martin*, one tends to think in the protagonist's terms. And this last stage, when one has to check all the references and proofread the entire draft, may best be described in an expression Martin would use from the Royal Navy: "RDP" or Run-Down Period.

In retrospect, after an exploration into a pluralistic reading of Golding's work, the thesis runs the risk of not having provided an answer to any question. What is suggested in the thesis is that there is a socio-historical implication in the Fall of man, which is usually taken as a purely religious notion.

From the first chapter where the cosmic disaster is translated into historical terms to call attention to the passage from the "Rise" to the "Fall" of the modern man, the thesis goes on, in the second chapter, to examine Golding's depiction of a typical modern man in his "fallen state." *Pincher Martin* is typically "modern" in his capacity and rationality. However, there seems to be more to him than just being "modern." Corruption, intelligence, and a "Greed for life" date back to the very beginning of the "Fall" following the extinction of the Neanderthals, according to Golding, and long before the Biblical "records" of human history. Though only an "ineffectual" fictional character, Martin seems to represent the entire human race, with his fallen nature. If Martin is not only seen as a modern man with a history of two hundred years or so, but as Man with a history of thousands of years, there is bound to be some rationality behind the seeming rashness of the cosmic tragedy. An examination in the history of social development both of the West and of the East, in the third chapter, arrives at a possible concept of relativity with regard to Greed and the Fall. Some kind of deadlock seems to be opened with the interesting analogy from Dante that a "Fall" in the north could mean a "Rise" in the south, and maybe a "Fall" in the West a "Rise" in the East, or *vice versa*. The ultimate reasoning lies in the "trade-off" between the values derived from religion on the one

hand and civilization on the other, as well as those between morality and history: a "Fall" in one often implies a "Rise" in the other. The hero in *Pincher Martin*, like the rest of his race, is caught in the middle of these sets of "Falls" and "Rises."

On this carved rock of the world, every man is fallen, in terms of Christianity and, therefore, like Martin, is "chained" in a situation where there is little room for exercising one's "Greed for life." Somehow, with his intelligence, man manages to build his pyramids and sphinx, just as Martin builds his "Dwarf" with a stone head covered with foil. Man digs his grand canals, just as Martin carves his "Claudian" for a similar purpose. Man is proud of his "wall" because it is the only man-made object visible from the moon, and Martin also makes one across the trenches with seaweed, the only man-made object on the rock visible from the air:

'Men make patterns.'

Seaweed, to impose an unnatural pattern on nature, a pattern that would cry out to any rational beholder---Look! Here is thought. Here is man!

'The best form would be a single indisputable line drawn at right angles to the trenches, piled so high that it will not only show a change of colour but even throw a shadow of its own.' (p.109)

By playing the role of man in his microcosmic world, Martin brings the entire civilization of man into focus. If one "hour" on the rock is indeed a "lifetime" as Martin observes, and if a lifetime is taken as the short span of thirty years, roughly Martin's age upon his death, then the "seven days" he "survives" amount approximately to 5,000 years, the whole length of man's civilized history. However, an alternative intelligence reveals to man the temporality of the "rock" he clings to. Perhaps one day, man will discover that the mother earth his life depends on is no more than a decaying tooth fallen from a "macrocosmic" jaw. The truth that even this "crevice will crumble" (p.195) has been made clear time and again, but there has always been a stubborn resistance to it. The conflict between these two kinds of intelligence, the rational and the visionary, is made more acute in the modern man with all his scientific miracles. Martin represents this conflict in the many parts he plays.

In the same way as Martin, Golding plays more than one part, and that is probably why many of the concepts he is discussing appear contradictory to one another. However, one thing seems to be consistent, "counteraction," and a similar approach has been adopted in the present thesis in an attempt to bring the apparently "lopsided" criticism of Golding a little back into balance.

Despite its obvious lack of eloquence and cogency, the evidence and arguments in the present thesis might serve as a pointer to the way in which a "non-religious" literary scholar could take account of some traditional Christian concepts. No doubt, one of the reasons why Golding has proved to be such a controversial writer both in the East and in the West, especially in view of the marginal decision by the Swedish Academy, may well be that he has presented an out-dated method using metaphysical concepts in a way that socio-historical criticism has to recognize. If the gap in literary criticism between the Left and Right could never be bridged, at least it is hoped that the one between East and West, with regard to the understanding of Golding, could be narrowed.

The Chinese have a saying: when the cultural background is at variance, an attempt to answer a question is like trying to stop an itch by scratching the outside of the boot. The more one scratches, the more frustrated one becomes, realizing the monstrosity of this cultural barrier. Towards the end of one's "boot-scratching" efforts, one feels almost as helpless as Martin, confronted with the shiny, black, gigantic seaboots of the Big Fisherman.

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